

# Foreign Military Studies Office

# OEWATCH



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*FOREIGN NEWS & PERSPECTIVES OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT*



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**ON THE COVER:**

*Soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, 2011*

Source: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff via Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soldiers\\_of\\_the\\_Chinese\\_People%27s\\_Liberation\\_Army\\_-\\_2011.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soldiers_of_the_Chinese_People%27s_Liberation_Army_-_2011.jpg), Public domain

# OEWATCH

## Foreign News & Perspectives of the Operational Environment

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## Russia's General Staff to Supervise All-Russia Defense Doctrine

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to the Russian popular journal *Izvestia*, draft amendments to a Russian Presidential Decree are being finalized that will give the military's General Staff a central and supervising role in developing, integrating, and coordinating the national concepts and doctrine for the total security of the state. Among the sweeping list of institutions that will coordinate with the General Staff in the integrated defense concept are the Federal Security Service (FSB), Federal Protective Service, Ministry of Emergencies, the country's defense industrial complex, and even other "law enforcement agencies and authorities at all levels." In fact, President Putin himself has framed the collection of the security organizations as "The Military Organization." This is a new and standout characterization of the often stove-piped institutions.

The article notes that the reason for this national integrating action is that "modern conflicts are fleeting in nature and are accompanied by the active use of both military and non-military means." It is important to know that the General Staff considers non-military actions to comprise 80% of the character of contemporary conflict. Russia's official military policy specifically states that Russia will take military measures in providing for "the safety of the vital interests" of individual Russians, the society, and the state. And while the policy instructs the military establishment to apply measures "only after political, diplomatic, legal, economic, informational, and other non-violent instruments have been exhausted," it does not preclude the military's participation, support, or the development of its capacities in any of these domains.

Interesting also is that this is not entirely new news. The genesis of the presidential initiative goes back to 2013 but, according to *Izvestia*, the process was stymied by "the resistance of the bureaucrats" and "unwillingness to be subordinate to the General Staff's instructions." Also during that time, the General Staff itself was sorting out strategic and operational events while grappling with doctrinal development and reforms to the force. Recently, it seems to be turning a corner in consolidating doctrine, especially for actions before the outbreak of armed warfighting, or the competition phase as it is known to western analysts. (See "Advancing Hybrid Warfare in Russian Doctrine Discussions" and "The Old/New Way of Waging Russian New Type War/Hybrid Warfare," *OE Watch*, November 2019.) It is also interesting that the General Staff perspective, as reported, is nonplussed: "The amendments that are being proposed... do not grant any additional authorities or missions whatsoever to the Armed Forces General Staff. They only specify separate functions of the General Staff within existing authority, which have been defined in the statute on the Defence Ministry."

Regardless, the forthcoming decree is a legal bridge over any gaps between the military and non-military institutions in terms of coordinated state efforts. It also reinforces the Russian General Staff's status as a keeper of Russian strategic culture, and it makes good use of its institutional design for detailed planning aimed at operational art. As noted in the article, Russian observers believe that this will transform the General Staff "into an important interdepartmental structure." Whereas greater efficiency in things like mobilization and arms exports are among the intended, immediate outcomes of the decree, the General Staff's elevated position linked to concomitant initiatives that are enhancing centralized, secure command and control—things like the National Defense Management Center, the consolidated National Guard, and sovereign communication networks (also referenced in the article)—it is not hard to imagine more integrated, whole-of-government defense and security activities networked through the General Staff. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm)**

***“In recent years, the government bodies have been involved in the development of the concepts which relate to the country's defence sphere. The General Staff should become a supervisory body in this sphere, which assembles, integrates, and coordinates all of these documents... According to the proposed changes, the federal and regional authorities will have to coordinate with the General Staff all of the plans, which are somehow or other associated with defence.”***



*Emblem of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces.*  
Source: w:Генеральный штаб Вооружённых сил Российской Федерации via Wikimedia,  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great\\_emblem\\_of\\_the\\_General\\_Staff\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_Armed\\_Forces.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Great_emblem_of_the_General_Staff_of_the_Russian_Armed_Forces.svg), Public Domain





## Continued: Russia's General Staff to Supervise All-Russia Defense Doctrine

***“The experts think that the expansion of the functions will raise the status of the General Staff, while transforming it into an important interdepartmental structure.”***

**Source:** “В Центре обороны: Генеральный штаб назначен старшим среди органов безопасности (At Centre of Defence: General Staff Appointed Senior Among security agencies),” *Izvestia*, 26 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/930009/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-roman-kretcul/v-tcentre-oborony-genshtab-naznachaiut-starshim-sredi-siloviko>

*“...At times, they had to overcome the resistance of the bureaucrats locally and to combat unwillingness to be subordinate to the General Staff’s instructions. Right now the overwhelming majority of these issues have been resolved”....*

*....Putin gave a precise definition of the ‘military organisation’... The Military Organisation - and this is the Armed Forces, the National Guard Troops, the other military formations and agencies, and also the country’s defence industrial complex...*

*...According to the draft amendments, coordination with the federal agency responsible for communications on the issues of the joint operation of the national telecommunications network will appear among the General Staff’s new duties. Military personnel will have to develop the networks’ operating plans, protection from outside countermeasures, and restitution, if their*

*operation is disrupted. Furthermore, they propose to transfer to the military the accomplishment of tasks for the creation and transfer of the issuance of certificates of digital signatures of electronic keys, and also “other functions of the certification authority”...*

*At a meeting of the Security Council on November 22, the President noted that in solving problems in the field of defense and security, a clear interaction should be established between law enforcement agencies and authorities at all levels. According to him, the military organization’s management system should be “modern, reliable, multi-functional, have advanced information and analytical complexes, communications and intelligence. ”*

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## Change Is Coming for Russian Naval Infantry Brigades

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian Navy is somewhat unique among the three major branches of the Russian Armed Forces (Ground Forces, Navy, Aerospace Forces) because it is the only branch that has elements of the other units, namely aviation and ground combat. The Russian Navy's ground combat element is the Naval Infantry.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* describes the role of the Russian Naval Infantry, which along with the Coastal Artillery Troops, is part of the Coastal Defense Troops. Interestingly, the article compares the Naval Infantry to the Russian Airborne (VDV) Troops, and points out that much as the VDV is hindered by the lack of Transport Aviation (VTA), the Naval Infantry is hindered by the lack of Large Landing Ships (BDKs). Since these large-scale offensive capabilities are lacking, Russian planners likely envision the role of these forces in large-scale conflicts in defensive operations for Russian exclaves such as Crimea and Kaliningrad, and extremely remote areas such as Kamchatka.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses Russian plans to increase the size of, and standardize, the composition of Russian Naval Infantry Brigades. (Currently, there is no standardized composition.) According to *Izvestia*, there will be six maneuver battalions in each brigade (three naval infantry battalions, one assault battalion, one tank battalion, and one reconnaissance battalion), along with a sniper company and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) company. Although the Russian Naval Infantry currently lacks the necessary naval vessels and landing craft to conduct large-scale forced entry amphibious operations, these additions would significantly enhance its capability to conduct a coastal defense against a well-organized amphibious or airborne assault. Another interesting aspect of the article is a proposed role for the Naval Infantry in peacekeeping operations. Apparently the Naval Infantry is envisioned to work closely with Russian military police units during these endeavors.

The Naval Infantry was created along with the Navy during the reign of Peter the Great and is currently organized as follows: The Baltic Fleet, of the Western Joint Strategic Command, has the 336th Naval Infantry Brigade stationed in Baltiysk. The brigade is considered to be a significant portion of the ground element's defensive potential of the exclave of Kaliningrad. The Northern Fleet, of the Northern Joint Strategic Command, has the 61st Naval Infantry Brigade stationed in the town of 'Sputnik' in the Murmansk Oblast, not far from the borders of Russia, Finland, and Norway. In accordance with geographic location, its primary concern is Arctic operations. The Black Sea Fleet, of the Southern Joint Strategic Command, has the 810th Naval Infantry Brigade stationed in Sevastopol, with the exception of the 382nd Naval Infantry Battalion that is stationed in Temryuk, Krasnodar Krai. The brigade's situation improved significantly after Crimea became part of Russia. Much like the 336th Naval Infantry Brigade in Kaliningrad, the 810th is considered to be a significant portion of the ground element's defensive potential of the exclave of Crimea. The Caspian Flotilla, of the Southern Joint Strategic Command, has the 177th Regiment in Kaspiysk, Dagestan, with one Naval Infantry Battalion at the headquarters in Kaspiysk, and the other located in the city of Astrakhan, in the Astrakhan Oblast. The Pacific Fleet, of the Eastern Joint Strategic Command, is divided into two flotillas with over 2,000 kilometers between them, so the Pacific Fleet has two naval infantry brigades. The 155th Brigade is stationed in Vladivostok, while the 40th Brigade is deployed in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatka. Due to the remote location of Kamchatka, and the limited transportation network connecting it to Russian lines of communication, Kamchatka is occasionally described as an 'exclave.' As with Kaliningrad and Crimea, the ground elements aspects of the defense of Kamchatka is strongly tied to the Naval Infantry. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“Therefore the real mission of the Naval Infantry in the foreseeable future is the defense of enclaves.”***

***“The naval infantry brigades, which are in the Navy's composition, will be reformed...The presence of heavy armored vehicles will permit the “Black Berets” to operate autonomously at any point of the world, without relying on the support of the other types of troops...the Russian “Black Berets” will become expeditionary forces, which accomplish an extensive range of military and political missions...”***



## Continued: Change Is Coming for Russian Naval Infantry Brigades



Dress Rehearsal for 2013 Victory Day Parade on the Red Square/ Naval Infantrymen of the 336th Separate Naval Infantry Brigade.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/VictoryDayParade2013/i-TrjX7r3/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

**Source:** Aleksandr Anatolyevich Khramchikhin, “Российская морская пехота сегодня: Возможности и задачи черных беретов (Russian Naval Infantry Today: Capabilities and Missions of the Black Berets),” *Nezavisimaya Gazeta Online*, 6 December 2019. [http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2019-12-06/2\\_1073\\_marines.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/forces/2019-12-06/2_1073_marines.html)

### ***Russian Naval Infantry Today: Capabilities and Missions of the Black Berets***

*The training level of Russian naval infantrymen is no lower than for airborne troopers...They are the ones assigned the mission of ground security of Russian airfields and air defense facilities in Syria. And judging from everything, the actions of naval infantrymen in Syria are not limited to security alone. In the Soviet period (during the 1970s and 1980s), naval infantrymen made combat landings in Somalia, Ethiopia, South Yemen, and the Seychelles, helping our allies of that time or supporting evacuation of Soviet specialists and diplomats. In all cases the missions were executed faultlessly and without losses...In the early 1990s it was the Russian naval infantry making assault landings in Georgia...The naval infantry of all fleets fought for all they were worth in Chechnya (up to 200 naval infantrymen died in the first war and up to 50 in the second).*

*...the Russian Naval Infantry is far from the largest in the world. It hardly will have to take part at some time in classical amphibious landings in the course of large-scale wars, the more so as ...our Navy is not prepared to large-scale landings...the Naval Infantry is very similar to the VDV in this respect to colleagues in the VDV [Airborne Forces], who also have no way to conduct large-scale airborne landings and are not supported by military transport aviation...Therefore the Naval Infantry logically supplements the VDV as a component part of the Rapid Deployment Force. If such a need arises, specifically it will defend territories in the Baltic, Black Sea, and Pacific that are isolated geographically and possibly blockaded by the enemy, supplementing the Ground Troops and Coastal Defense Troops.*

*That said, the Naval Infantry is better suited than the VDV for raiding operations far from Russia's borders: the Naval Infantry does not need runways, assurance of air superiority, or a flight through foreign airspace. But there needs to be the constant presence of at least several large landing ships (BDKs) in various parts of the ocean, and at least one frigate must be “attached” to each BDK...To a certain extent that is how the USSR Navy operated during the 1970s and 1980s, but our BDKs are very old and, moreover, are overworked by the “Syrian Express,” and there is a great shortage of frigates as well. Therefore the real mission of the Naval Infantry in the foreseeable future is the defense of enclaves.*





## Continued: Change Is Coming for Russian Naval Infantry Brigades

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm, Aleksey Kozachenko, and Bogdan Stepovoy, “Выдадут броню: бригады морпехов усилят танковыми подразделениями (They Will Issue Armor: They Will Reinforce Naval Infantry Brigades with Tank Subunits),” *Izvestia Online*, 22 October 2019. <https://iz.ru/923772/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/vydadut-broniu-brigady-morpekhov-usiliat-tankovymi-podrazdeleniiami>

### ***They Will Issue Armor. They Will Reinforce Naval Infantry Brigades with Tank Subunits***

*The naval infantry brigades, which are in the Navy’s composition, will be reformed...The presence of heavy armored vehicles will permit the “Black Berets” to operate autonomously at any point of the world, without relying on the support of the other types of troops...the Russian “Black Berets” will become expeditionary forces, which accomplish an extensive range of military and political missions...*

*The brigades will get a new manning table – there will be six battalions in it (right now, there are two: an air assault-landing battalion and a naval infantry battalion - in the formations, and also a reconnaissance company and a number of smaller subunits). One reconnaissance, one tank, and two naval infantry battalions will also additionally appear. The tank subunits will increase both the “Black Berets” firepower and also maneuvering capabilities. The armored vehicles will permit the conduct of adequately large-scale combat operations. Furthermore, they will augment the brigade with two companies – a sniper company and an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) company. In the future, the naval infantrymen can obtain their own aviation subunits, sources in the Ministry of Defense told Izvestiya...In accordance with the new manning table, a naval infantry battalion consists of three companies – air assault landing and two “Black Berets” [Naval Infantry], a self-propelled artillery battery, antitank and grenade launcher platoons, and other units. Approximately 400-500 men will serve in those formations.*

*The transfer of the expeditionary functions to the Naval Infantry – is a well-considered step, Former Navy Main Staff Chief Admiral Valentin Selivanov thinks. “Right now, operations, like the Syrian operation, are becoming particularly important”, he told Izvestiya. “And the decision on increasing the combat capabilities of the naval infantry subunits – is correct. This is one of the most combat-capable types of troops, which has high proficiency and rich combat experience and history. The ‘Black Berets’ have participated in all of the military conflicts of recent years. And they have proven themselves everywhere, including in Syria”.*

*The operation in this Middle Eastern country have assigned a new mission – expeditionary - to the Russian Armed Forces, “Arms Export” Magazine Scientific Editor Mikhail Baranov is confident. “Historically, it has developed in such a way that the Naval Infantry is best suited for this”, the Expert explained to Izvestiya.*

*During the course of military, humanitarian, or peacekeeping operations, naval infantrymen will have to evacuate Russian citizens and take control of the naval bases and coastal facilities. Heavy vehicles – those same tanks – are needed to conduct the majority of those operations, Barabanov summarized. After the arrival of the main force, they will assign the functions for the maintenance of order in some or other populated area to the military police. But even in this case, the Naval Infantry will be responsible for the security of the external perimeter...*



### **THE RUSSIAN WAY OF WAR by LESTER W. GRAU and CHARLES K. BARTLES**

At any given time, assessments of the Russian Armed Forces vary between the idea of an incompetent and corrupt conscript army manning decrepit Soviet equipment and relying solely on brute force, to the idea of an elite military filled with Special Operations Forces (SOF) who were the “polite people” or “little green men” seen on the streets in Crimea. This book will attempt to split the difference between these radically different ideas by shedding some light on what the Russian Ground Forces consist of, how they are structured, how they fight, and how they are modernizing.

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## Kaliningrad Gets New Motorized Rifle and Aviation Divisions

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpted article from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* discusses Russian plans to place a Motorized Rifle Division (MRD) in Kaliningrad. Since Russia has conducted a limited reintroduction of the division/regimental structure, almost all of these new formations have been located in Russia's perceived high-threat areas on the South-West axes. The passage suggests that Russia views the placement of a division in Kaliningrad as a response to increased NATO force structure in Poland and the Baltics. Although Russia is introducing a new division, the actual relative combat power may not increase substantially. This is because Russia could form this division as it has formed its other divisions- by simply combining existing units. The new division will likely consist of existing Ground Forces units in Kaliningrad under the 11th Army Corps to include the 79th Motorized Rifle Brigade, 7th Separate Motorized Rifle Regiment, 11th Separate Tank Regiment, 244th Artillery Brigade, and the 22nd Air Defense Regiment.

The accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* discusses the formation of the Aerospace Forces' (VKS) new 132nd Composite Aviation Division. As *Izvestiya* explains, this new division will provide better command and control capabilities, but will not include any new units with the exception of the recently formed 689th Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment. Essentially, the 132nd Composite Aviation Division just organizes existing VKS and Naval Aviation units under a unified VKS command. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“The North Atlantic Bloc is developing its infrastructure near the Russian borders in both the Baltic States and also in Poland, a large operational grouping is being deployed there.***

***I think that the appearance of the new division is precisely directed at strengthening the region's defensive capabilities”***

***-Viktor Murakhovskiy, the editor-in-chief of “Arsenal of the Fatherland” Magazine***

***“The Kaliningrad Oblast and the Crimea remain potential dangerous axes, the NATO countries, which border them, have become substantially stronger militarily. The Alliance's interest in these regions is confirmed by the increase of the number of reconnaissance flights along the Russian border... These regions have identical problems and they remain rather vulnerable. NATO has a serious advantage in both strike and also reconnaissance systems on these axes. The strengthening of the aviation component is an attempt to counter and create a balance of forces”***

***-Military Expert Dmitriy Boltenev***





## Continued: Kaliningrad Gets New Motorized Rifle and Aviation Divisions

**Source:** Aleksandr Stepanov, “Усилят дивизией (They Will Reinforce with a Division),” *Rossiyskaya Gazeta Online*, 2 December 2019. <https://rg.ru/2019/12/02/reg-szfo/v-kaliningradskoj-oblasti-poiavitsia-motostrelkovaia-diviziia.html>

### ***They Will Reinforce with a Division***

*...A Baltic Fleet spokesman has reported that one more motorized rifle formation with deployment location in Kaliningrad Oblast will be formed in the region next year. According to the information of Interfax Agency, we are talking about a full-fledged motorized rifle division, which will appear on our western borders.*

*According to Military Expert Viktor Murakhovskiy, the editor-in-chief of “Arsenal of the Fatherland” Magazine, that decision is absolutely justified...”The North Atlantic Bloc is developing its infrastructure near the Russian borders in both the Baltic States and also in Poland, a large operational grouping is being deployed there. I think that the appearance of the new division is precisely directed at strengthening the region’s defensive capabilities”, the expert suggested.*

*In his opinion, the current forces, which are located in the Oblast, are clearly inadequate for the organization of an effective defense. “All the more so that there are actually two fronts there, and the division is needed in order to organize a high-quality defense, if necessary...”Of course, in the event of the hypothetical deployment of a NATO operational offensive grouping in Poland and the Baltic States, we will also not sit in anticipation and will also reinforce the grouping in the region, while redeploying a portion of the forces from Russia. However, the new division is needed precisely for the prevention of suddenly emerging implicit intentions”, Murakhovskiy stressed.*

*He recalled that NATO plans to have 30 battalion tactical teams, 30 ships, and 30 Air Force squadrons on the Oblast’s borders by the end of 2020, which can be deployed in this region for 30 days. And the appearance of the new formation – is a countermeasure to those threats...*

**Source:** Aleksey Kozachenko, Aleksey Ramm, Bogdan Stepovoy, and Roman Kretsul, “НАТО так надо: новые авиадивизии закроют небо над Балтикой и Крымом (What is Needed for NATO: New Aviation Divisions Will Cover the Sky Over the Baltic and the Crimea),” *Izvestia Online*, 30 October 2019. <https://iz.ru/905530/aleksei-kozachenko-aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi-roman-kretcul/nato-tak-nado-novye-aviadivizii-zakroiut-nebo-nad-baltikoi-i-krymom>

### ***What is Needed for NATO: New Aviation Divisions Will Cover the Sky Over the Baltic and the Crimea***

*Naval Aviation has rallied to the defense of Russia’s borders. The Ministry of Defense is deploying two divisions with high-tech headquarters and command and control posts in Kaliningrad Oblast and the Crimea. The constitution of these formations will conclude by the end of the year. All of the combat aircraft on these territories will be integrated into a single command. If necessary, the requirement for the military to build up these forces and strengthen their defenses may appear in a short time. The new command and control system will permit placing the aviation regiments and squadrons, which have been redeployed from the other military districts under a single command. In the opinion of the experts who were polled by Izvestiya, the strengthening of the aviation component is in response to NATO’s buildup of forces in the strategically important regions near the Russian borders...*

*According to the information of Izvestiya’s sources at the Ministry of Defense, the formation of 132nd Composite Aviation Division has begun in Kaliningrad Oblast. It will consist of the 4th Guards Naval Ground Attack Aviation Regiment, which is armed with Su-24 frontal aviation bombers and Su-30SM fighter aircraft. And also – the recently formed 689th Guards Fighter Aviation Regiment, which should receive modernized Su-27SM and Su-35S fighter aircraft in the near future. Finally, the 396th Separate Ship-Based Antisubmarine Warfare Helicopter Squadron, 125th Separate Helicopter, and 398th Separate Transport Helicopter Squadron will join the Division’s composition. The City of Chernyakhovsk has become the formation’s basing location.*

*The Kaliningrad Oblast and the Crimea remain potentially dangerous axes, the NATO countries, which border them, have become substantially stronger militarily. The Alliance’s interest in these regions is confirmed by the increase of the number of reconnaissance flights along the Russian border, Military Expert Dmitriy Boltenev told Izvestiya. “These regions have identical problems and they remain rather vulnerable. NATO has a serious advantage in both strike and also reconnaissance systems on these axes. The strengthening of the aviation component is an attempt to counter and create a balance of forces”, the expert said. “In the event of the exacerbation of the situation here, one will be able to rapidly redeploy only aircraft. Therefore, the entire aviation component of both regions will most likely be resubordinated to the fleets. This will significantly improve coordination among the types of troops and will make the aircraft and helicopters more effective”...*

*“The contemporary division has powerful command and control tools, which provide the capability to effectively manage aviation on a large front”, he pointed out. “Now, the commanders can efficiently reallocate forces among the axes. The headquarters will also obtain the capability to more rapidly plan combat operations and disseminate missions to the subunits and to better organize coordination with neighboring formations, the ground troops, and the fleet. Finally, electronics will permit the management of all-arms aviation during the course of an operation along its entire depth...”*



# New Russian System for the Long-Range Deployment of Mines

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian Multiple Launch Rocket Systems (MLRSs) such as the 120mm BM-21 Grad, 220mm BM-27 Uragan, and 300mm BM-30 Smerch have munitions that can deploy scatterable mines at a considerable distance. This capability is similar to that of the US's Family of Scatterable Mines (FASCAM). Although these MLRSs can all employ these types of munitions, in practice they are typically only deployed by the BM-27 Uragan (the 9M59 munition can deploy 9 PTM-3 antitank mines) and BM-30 Smerch (the 9M55K4 munition can deploy 25 PTM-3 antitank mines). The BM-21 Grad, the only MLRS type at brigade/division level, is capable of firing the 9M22K2/9M28K scatterable mine munition, but rarely does so. This is because the 9M22K2/9M28K munition is only capable of deploying three PTM-3 antitank mines. Creating just a 1km minefield requires a minimum of 90 9M22K2/9M28K munitions; if the intent is to deter or slow a tank battalion, an entire battalion of BM-21s (18 launchers) are required.



BM-21 Grad MLRS at the Victory Day Parade, 2014.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin via Vitalykuzmin.net, <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/2014-Victory-Day-Parade-in-NN/i-tBfxRD7/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

The accompanying excerpted article from *TASS* discusses Russian plans to procure the Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM) [Инженерная Система Дистанционного Минирования (ИСДМ)]. The ISDM is a dedicated system for deploying scatterable mines at a distance of up to 15km. The system consists of a launch vehicle, transport-loading vehicle, and transport-launch containers with munitions equipped with various types of mines. Although the Russian military already has a number of systems that can deploy remotely scatterable mines such as by fixed and rotary wing aircraft, and the before mentioned MLRSs, the adoption of the ISDM will give Russian brigade/division-level commanders a more feasible organic engineer asset for the long distance emplacement of minefields. The accompanying excerpted article from *Svobodnaya Pressa* explains how this new system will be featured in the 2020 Victory Parade on Red Square. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“Russia’s Defense Ministry has signed a contract with Tecmash hi-tech company on the manufacture and the delivery of the latest Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM), its launch vehicles and munitions...”***

**Source:** “Минобороны закупило новейшую инженерную систему дистанционного минирования (The Ministry of Defense Purchased an Engineering System for Remote Mining),” *TASS Online*, 2 July 2019. <https://tass.ru/armiya-i-opk/6619247>

### ***The Ministry of Defense Purchased an Engineering System for Remote Mining***

*...Russia’s Defense Ministry has signed a contract with Tecmash hi-tech company on the manufacture and the delivery of the latest Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM), its launch vehicles and munitions...*

*“At the Army-2019 forum, the Tecmash Group of Rostec State Corporation signed a contract with the Defense Ministry on the delivery of combat vehicles and munitions. The state contract was signed for three years and stipulates the manufacture and the delivery of the Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM),” Tecmash said. Tecmash declined to specify the number of purchased vehicles, the pace of deliveries or the sum of the contract...*

*The ISDM remote-controlled mine-laying engineering system includes combat vehicles with transporter-launcher containers with munitions and mines with different fuse types, and also a transporter-loader vehicle. The ISDM is mounted on a KAMAZ chassis equipped with the armored cabin and an automated weather station. The new system operates within a radius of 5-15 km. Launcher containers optimized for using new-generation land mines have been developed for the ISDM system.*

*The ISDM makes an automatic salvo at designated target points, registers explosion areas and transmits data to higher headquarters and to the transporter-loader vehicle.*

**Source:** Victor Sokirko, “Парад-2020: Шойгу покажет новую технику, а Путин — Трампа, Меркель и Макрона (Parade 2020: Shoigu will show new equipment, and Putin - Trump, Merkel and Macron),” *Svobodnaya Pressa Online*, 21 November 2019. <https://svpressa.ru/war21/article/249598>

### ***Parade 2020: Shoigu will show new equipment, and Putin - Trump, Merkel and Macron***

*...the current parade dedicated to the 75th anniversary of the Victory, as Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoigu assured...that more than 20 types of new and modernized equipment...about 300 pieces of equipment, including more than 100 aircraft, and more than 14 thousand military personnel will participate in the parade...*

*In the Victory Parade, according to the Defense Minister, will be T-15 infantry fighting vehicles on the Armata chassis, and Kurganets-25 chassis with the new ‘Dagger’ and ‘Epoch’ combat modules [turrets]...The S-350 Vityaz and S-300V4 anti-aircraft missile systems, the Derivatsiya-PVO self-propelled anti-aircraft gun, the Engineering System for Remote Mining (ISDM manufactured by the Tekhmash concern), and the Typhoon family of armored vehicles will be presented...*





## Battle Management Information System: The Brains of Automated Command and Control

**OE Watch Commentary:** The desire to field an effective Automated Command and Control System (ASU) was first realized by the Soviets, but technological limitations regarding computers and communications stifled these ambitions. In recent years, Russia has made great advances in these areas. Modern Russian ASUs are intended for troop command and control during the conduct of combat, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations, and also while in garrison. As described in the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia*, the ‘brains’ of an ASU is the Battle Management Information System [информационная система боевого управления], a subsystem of the ASU, which coordinates and analyzes the continuous exchange of data among the command posts, headquarters, and troops. Reconnaissance systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles and satellites, have also reportedly been integrated into the system, permitting the collection of information about the enemy in near real time. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

**“In an engagement, this data will begin to arrive from servicemen, equipment, and various reconnaissance systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles. All of this will occur in real time. The information will be processed, summarized, and analyzed instantaneously using the artificial intelligence system...”**

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm, Aleksey Kozachenko, and Roman Kretsul, “Памятная бигдата: генералам поможет искусственный интеллект (The Memory Brigade: Artificial Intelligence Will Assist the Generals),” *Izvestia* Online, 13 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/941925/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-roman-kretsul/pamiatnaia-bigdata-generalam-pomozhet-iskusstvennyi-intellekt>

### ***The Memory Brigade: Artificial Intelligence Will Assist the Generals***

*The military district and combined arms army commanders will be able to make decisions much more quickly in combat situations. A unique system with elements of artificial intelligence and Big Data technologies will analyze the situation and propose to them a choice of several options of operations. The military leaders will also see the prediction of the development of events and brief recommendations. The official designation of the innovation is – “Battle Management Information System” [информационная система боевого управления], a source at the Ministry of Defense told Izvestiya. It has undergone testing in the troops since last year and has begun to operate in standard mode right now.*

*According to the military regulations, the commander must make the decision on an engagement, while taking dozens of factors into account: the quantity of his own men and equipment, reconnaissance data about the enemy, the state of the roads, weather conditions, the quantity of ammunition, fuel, oils, lubricants, logistics resources, the morale-psychological state of the personnel, and many other things. All of this data, which is expressed in concrete indicators, is calculated based upon special algorithms, after which a combat order is compiled: how many forces to send to some axis, to conduct artillery fire against which targets and areas and using what quantity of ammunition, where to locate the reserves, how to organize the transport of provisions, the evacuation of the wounded, and damaged vehicles, etc.*

*The Battle Management Information System collects data from all of the services, processes them, and elaborates decisions in a matter of seconds. The different options of the development of events that are presented to the commander are prioritized, beginning from the most potentially successful. In the words of several Izvestiya sources in the Military Department, the system uses elements of artificial intelligence and Big Data technologies...One can use artificial intelligence Big Data technologies with great effectiveness in the military sphere, thereby having saved the lives of hundreds of servicemen, Denis Kuskov, the General Director of Telecom Daily Analytical Company, told Izvestiya.*

*“Big Data technology provides the capability to transmit practically unlimited amounts of data, including video, text, and graphic information,” the expert commented. “In an engagement, this data will begin to arrive from servicemen, equipment, and various reconnaissance systems, including unmanned aerial vehicles. All of this will occur in real time. The information will be processed, summarized, and analyzed instantaneously using the artificial intelligence system. This will certainly help the commander to understand and decide how best to use the troops and resources.*



**A set of automation equipment for aviation and air defense from the composition of the mobile automated control system of the Ground Forces Akatsiya-ME (Air Defense and aviation module of Land Forces command system Akatsiya-ME).**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, [vitalykuzmin.net](https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Engineering-Technologies-2012/i-xPJWhS/A), <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/Engineering-Technologies-2012/i-xPJWhS/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



**Computer for a battalion commander.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, [vitalykuzmin.net](https://www.vitalykuzmin.net), <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/MAKS-2011/i-PQpfwPF/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0



## Russia Adds Heavy Flamethrower Battalions

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the Russian Armed Forces, The Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) Defense Troops operate both shoulder-fired and vehicle-launched thermobaric flamethrowers. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Krasnaya Zvezda* explains, these thermobaric weapons are particularly useful for dislodging personnel from fixed and/or fortified positions in field and particularly urban environments. In the current structure of the Russian Ground Forces, shoulder-fired flamethrower squads and platoons may be found in the NBC Defense companies of Russian maneuver brigades. Company-sized flamethrower units can only be found in the flamethrower battalions in the NBC Defense regiments of the Combined Arms Armies, Tank Army, and Army Corps. The typical Russian flamethrower battalion consists of two companies of shoulder-launched flamethrowers, and one company of vehicle-launched “heavy” flamethrowers. The typical shoulder-fired flamethrower company has 71 personnel and nine BMO-T ‘Terminators’ (the BMO-T is a modified T-72 chassis for the transportation of 20-30 of the highly volatile shoulder-fired disposable RPO-A Shmel series flamethrowers). The typical vehicle-launched “heavy” flamethrower company has 35 personnel, three TOS-1A ‘Solntsepek’ heavy flamethrowers, each with 24 220mm thermobaric rockets mounted on a T-72 chassis, and six TZM-T transporter/loader vehicles that are also mounted on a T-72 chassis.

As the accompanying excerpted article from *Izvestia* explains, the Russian Ground Forces are now planning to create battalion-sized units of heavy flamethrowers. These heavy flamethrowers battalions will likely consist of three or four heavy (vehicle-launched) flamethrower companies and a motorized rifle platoon (possibly a company) to escort the TOS-1As to the launch area. Due to the nature of the thermobaric rockets, the system’s maximum range is only 5-6 km, so the TOS-1A must get relatively close to its intended target (compared to most indirect weapons) to deliver its payload, making the motorized rifle platoon a sensible addition. Although not discussed in the article, these battalions could be assigned to the NBC Defense brigades that report directly to their respective Military Districts. The need for these heavy flamethrower battalions can be seen as a direct consequence of Russian activities in Syria and Eastern Ukraine, as the TOS-1As have reportedly been quite useful for combatting enemies in field fortifications, urban, and subterranean environments that have characterized these conflicts. **End OE Watch Commentary (Bartles)**

***“A well-fortified stronghold can be held for a long time. Much time and many forces are needed to eliminate a subunit burrowed into the earth. Infantry, tanks, artillery and aviation must be engaged. A hostile “mini-fortress” with a garrison of at least several dozen men can become a cunning snare for an offensive as it gains speed. However, this is only the case when the arsenal of the attacking forces does not include flamethrower units.”***

***“Solntsepek heavy flamethrowers will clear the road for “Armata” tanks and motorized riflemen. They will form battalions, which are armed with those powerful systems, in each military district, sources in the Ministry of Defense told Izvestiya. Their primary mission – is to dislodge the enemy from fortifications.”***





## Continued: Russia Adds Heavy Flamethrower Battalions

**Source:** Yuriy Borodin, Королевская свита «Солнцепёков» (The Palace Guard- ‘the Solntsepeks’),” *Krasnaya Zvezda Online*, 9 September 2019. <http://redstar.ru/korolevskaya-svita-solntsepyokov/>

### ***The Palace Guard- ‘the Solntsepeks’***

*A well-fortified stronghold can be held for a long time. Much time and many forces are needed to eliminate a subunit burrowed into the earth. Infantry, tanks, artillery and aviation must be engaged. A hostile “mini-fortress” with a garrison of at least several dozen men can become a cunning snare for an offensive as it gains speed.*

*However, this is only the case when the arsenal of the attacking forces does not include flamethrower units. Even the hand-held rocket-propelled infantry flamethrower (for example, the RPO-A Shmel) is a powerful asset for destroying a fortified enemy. And this does not begin to compare to the TOS-1A Solntsepek heavy flamethrower systems, which replaced the TOS-1 Buratino system! The Buratino performed excellently in Afghanistan and in the North Caucasus.*

*Mounted on the T-72 tank base the salvo fire system is able to dispatch unguided rocket rounds with a special thermobaric warhead to a great distance. After the munition arrives at the “designated site” a fuel-air mixture ignites destroying both the personnel and the equipment of the enemy, and his fortifications. Even a single round is able to destroy the platoon stronghold of the enemy. And there are 24 of them in the launcher.*

*“Our flamethrower platoon is able to destroy the platoon stronghold of the enemy very quickly. This will now be practiced,” Sergeant Maksim Mekhtiyev, commander of the flamethrower section, described the operations of his fellow soldiers.*

*The combat vehicles pay no heed to natural barriers of broken terrain, and easily surmount ravines, dirty “swamps,” and sand dunes. The designers of the TOS systems were careful that their offspring would be powerful not only in the execution of fire missions, but also in occupying and leaving firing positions. Modern warfare requires great maneuverability. Under such conditions staying in one place not just for hours, but for minutes is tantamount to suicide. The flamethrower troops operate according to a plan: deploy to the firing position – launch – change position. Another way of characterizing the latter is “withdrawing under a retaliatory strike.”...*



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**TOS-1A heavy flamethrower systems firing.**

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, [vitalykuzmin.net](http://vitalykuzmin.net), <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/RKhBZ-Troops/i-fjBmwFp/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0





## Continued: Russia Adds Heavy Flamethrower Battalions



Combat vehicle BM-1 from TOS-1A heavy flamethrower system.

Source: Vitaly Kuzmin, [vitalykuzmin.net](https://www.vitalykuzmin.net), <https://www.vitalykuzmin.net/Military/RKhBZ-Troops/i-9bcZqfv/A>, CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

**Source:** Aleksey Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoy, Система выжигания: в армии создадут батальоны тяжелых огнеметов (Fire System: They Will Create Heavy Flamethrower Battalions in the Army),” *Izvestia Online*, 22 October 2019. <https://iz.ru/928820/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/sistema-vyzhiganiia-v-armii-sozhdadut-batalony-tiazhelykh-ognemetov>

### ***Fire System: They Will Create Heavy Flamethrower Battalions in the Army***

“Solntsepek heavy flamethrowers will clear the road for Armata tanks and motorized riflemen. They will form battalions, which are armed with those powerful systems, in each military district, sources in the Ministry of Defense told *Izvestiya*. Their primary mission – is to dislodge the enemy from fortifications. Russian military personnel were unable to define the concept of the employment of these launchers for a long time, although they have been exporting them for several years now. The “Solntsepek” systems have found a place in the combat formations only right now: they will have to literally scorch the earth with thermobaric charges prior to the attack.

Several companies of heavy flamethrower systems and a subunit of motorized riflemen, which will provide the security of the launchers during a march and on the front line, will be part of the battalion. Each new unit will receive more than 10 TOS-1A “Solntsepek” combat systems and transporter-loader vehicles, sources in the Defense Department told *Izvestiya*...

The new flamethrower units are capable of breaching any enemy field defense and of effectively operating against terrorists’ bunkers, Arsenal of the Fatherland Magazine Editor-in-Chief Viktor Murakhovskiy thinks. “The ‘Solntsepek’ systems provide complete destruction on a large area”, the Military Expert told *Izvestiya*. “They are good during the breach of heavily defended fortified areas. Ordinary tube or rocket-propelled artillery will require much more time and ammunition to accomplish a similar mission. Moreover, the result will not be ensured in the end. But the heavy flamethrowers using fuel-air explosive munitions will destroy that defense with one salvo. Later tanks and motorized riflemen should enter the engagement and, essentially, there will already be no one to offer resistance to them...”

The “Solntsepeks” – are unique combat systems, the equivalents to which do not exist in the world’s other armies. For example, similar weapons are not manufactured in the NATO countries: it is not spelled out in the concept for the conduct of combat operations, in which the North Atlantic Alliance participated in recent decades. In the 1980s, precisely when the TOS were being developed and tested in the USSR, the American command authorities were developing the AirLand Battle Concept. It assumes the employment of long-range and precision-guided weapons – aircraft, cruise missiles, and rocket-propelled artillery. Those combat operations are fleeting and have a cellular nature. A precisely fixed front line is absent during them. The Americans assumed that wars will become contactless – light mobile infantry will conduct in-depth raids under the cover of aircraft. They considered assault operations to have receded into the past. As a result, in Viktor Murakhovskiy’s words, they spent a year for the seizure of Iraq’s Mosul and the storming of Syria’s Raqqa was dragged out for four months. In the process, the cities were completely destroyed by aircraft. Right now, American military personnel and experts are discussing the overdue reform of the Army and Marines. It is assumed that they should be capable of conducting a combined-arms engagement...





# Measuring Morale in the Russian Military

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past decade, the Kremlin leadership has invested considerable time, effort, and resources to improving the status and combat readiness of the Russian armed forces, and these efforts appear to be paying off. As the first excerpt from a recent poll conducted by the independent *Levada Center* indicate, trust in the military ranks even higher than that of the president (63% vs. 60%). This level of trust is especially noteworthy when considering that 20 years ago, only 35% of Russians were confident that the military could defend the state.

Despite these efforts, however, there are indications that problems remain within the ranks. According to the second excerpt from the pro-Kremlin news source *Izvestia*, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) has recently announced a prophylactic (and possible punitive) measure to ensure that unit morale remains high. The gist of the article revolves around the development of “new methodologies for assessing the microclimate in units and formations during both peacetime and wartime.” The recently re-constituted Main Military-Political Directorate is creating sociological centers which will allegedly “objectively assess the state of a subunit or the command quality.” As the article points out, if these sociologists “identify a low level of personnel morale in any unit, the commanders will face a punishment up to dismissal.”



Russian soldiers marching in Victory Day Parade, 9 May 2019.  
Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60490> CCA 4.0 Intl

The timing of this MoD announcement is curious. As the third excerpt indicates, less than two weeks prior, a conscript assigned to a unit in Siberia “shot and killed eight of his colleagues.” According to the article, the father of the conscript claimed that “hazing was the cause of the incident,” while MoD officials “denied this possibility.” While much of the increased trust in the military stems from actual improvements in personnel, equipment and training, some of it can also be attributed to positive reporting on matters dealing with the military and a reluctance to advertise the negative. It remains to be seen whether conducting morale surveys within the Russian military ranks will improve assurance and discipline. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“In peacetime, a low personnel morale indicator can become the reason for the unit commander’s dismissal....”***

**Source:** “ИНСТИТУЦИОНАЛЬНОЕ ДОВЕРИЕ,” [Institutional Trust] *Levada Center*, 24 October 2019. <https://www.levada.ru/2019/10/24/institutsionalnoe-doverie-5/>

TO WHICH, IN YOUR OPINION, DO THE FOLLOWING STATE AUTHORITIES, PUBLIC MOVEMENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS DESERVE CONFIDENCE?

	Deserves it	Not quite deserving	Not at all deserving	Difficult to answer
Military	63	20	10	7
The president	60	25	14	2

**Source:** “Aleksei Ramm, Aleksei Kozachenko, Bogdan Stepovoi, “Социологический допрос: командиров уволят за плохое настроение солдат,” [Sociological Interrogation: Commanders to be Fired for Soldiers’ bad Mood’] *Izvestia*, 7 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/920120/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko-bogdan-stepovoi/sotciologicheskii-dopros-komandirov-uvoliat-za-plokhoe-nastroenie-soldat>

The mood and behavior of the Russian army’s soldiers and officers will be subjected to strict monitoring. For this purpose, a sociological center will be created in each military district, sources in the Defense Ministry reported to *Izvestiya*. If the personnel of the new subunit identify a low level of personnel morale in any unit, the commanders will face a punishment up to dismissal.

The sociological centers will be subordinate to the Main Military-Political Directorate (GlavVoenPUR). They will be manned with officers, who have specialized education. They will have to develop new methodologies for assessing the microclimate in units and formations during both peacetime and wartime, as well as put together sociological surveys and determine topics for focus groups.... The troops will begin conducting special questionnaire surveys in the near future....

The special survey questionnaire includes over 10 questions about food, sleep, stress, specific problems one can encounter in a combat environment, and so forth. Moreover, separate questionnaires have been prepared for each category of servicemen: conscript personnel, contract servicemen, or officers. ...Anonymous questionnaires can detect such problems in a timely manner and eliminate tension among personnel. In peacetime, a low personnel morale indicator can become the reason for the unit commander’s dismissal....

**Source:** “Отец Шамсутдинова объяснил свои слова о возбуждении дела о дедовщине,” [The Father of Shamsutdinov explained his words about initiating hazing] *RBC*, 20 November 2019. <https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/5dd537cf9a794704290b0cda>

Conscript Ramil Shamsutdinov shot and killed eight of his colleagues on October 25, after which he surrendered. Shamsutdinov’s father Salim said that hazing was the cause of the incident. The Ministry of Defense denied this possibility, explaining what happened as a personal conflict.



## Challenges When Leaving the Russian Military

**OE Watch Commentary:** Much has been written over the past decade about how the Kremlin has improved the prestige and professionalism of those serving in the armed forces. Those serving in the Russian military today enjoy considerable status and respect. But at some point, even the most experienced and qualified soldier must hang up the uniform and move into the civilian sector. The accompanying excerpts from an article in the military weekly *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye (NVO)*, describe some of the problems and challenges that professional Russian military personnel experience when transitioning back to civilian life.

The article begins by describing the major difficulties confronting those about to leave military service: “a radical change in daily life; relocation to a new place of residence; worsening financial situation; loss of housing and uncertainty about the possibility of obtaining it in a new place; problems of employment and the need to prepare for life under new conditions.” The author claims that there is a “reluctance within the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation to participate in solving their problems after leaving the military service.”

The article goes on to assert that “up to 70% of reserve officers have serious difficulties in choosing a civilian profession,” where “many of them remain unemployed for up to a year or more” after they leave the military. The author points out that “up to 96% of former military men say that they did not conduct any professional consultation work (on issues related to job search, retraining, adaptation to the labor market and a new job)... before being sent to the reserve.” While the article describes a regional organization designed to help military personnel transition to civilian life, Russia still does not have a Federal-level ministry to oversee and assist with handling veterans’ issues.

This long, detailed article includes data on the effects among those servicemen who took part in hostilities, and the need for helping ex-soldiers access medical and psychiatric care, as well as career advice to aid in their transition to civilian employment and society. The article concludes with a recommendation “to create an integrated system of medical, psychological and social rehabilitation for military personnel.” While the Kremlin has done much to improve the combat readiness and prestige of military service, this article suggests that it has been less solicitous toward helping military personnel return to civilian life. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“... the reluctance of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation to participate in solving their problems after leaving the military service...”***

**Source:** Vadim Kalinichev, “Кадровый военный уволился в запас, что дальше? (Career military resigned to the reserve, what’s next?),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 6 December 2019. [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-12-06/1\\_1073\\_dismissal.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-12-06/1_1073_dismissal.html)

*...The psychological state of a modern Russian officer who is preparing to dismiss or has already been dismissed from military service is largely determined by three groups of factors: the state of the country’s economy at the present stage; readiness of civil society to “receive” former military personnel and members of their families; the degree of attitude of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation to the servicemen and their families dismissed or retired.*

*Main problems:*

- a radical change in the whole way of life; relocation to a new place of residence; worsening financial situation; loss of housing and uncertainty about the possibility of obtaining it in a new place; problems of employment and the need to prepare for life in the new conditions;
- lack of guaranteed employment after service; underdevelopment of the system of professional training and retraining of reserve personnel, their employment; insufficient practical implementation of the benefits and rights of citizens dismissed from the Armed Forces;...
- open disregard by military command and control bodies at various levels for the problems of former military personnel; the reluctance of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation to participate in solving their problems after leaving the military service and others.

*...Serious difficulties in choosing a civilian profession are experienced by up to 70% of reserve officers. Many of them remain unemployed for up to a year or more....*

*...Officers resigning from military service, like no other category of citizens, need competent professional advice on all issues related to job search, retraining, adaptation to the labor market and a new job. Unfortunately, this kind of training is not conducted today either in military units or in military commissariats at the place of residence. Up to 96% of former military men say that they did not conduct any professional consultation work with them before being sent to the reserve....*

*...It is necessary to create an integrated system of medical, psychological and social rehabilitation of military personnel and internally displaced persons who have been injured as a result of hostilities, as well as having signs of post-traumatic stress disorders....*





## Revisiting the Chechen Tragedy on its 25th Anniversary

**OE Watch Commentary:** In December, Russia marked the 25th anniversary of what is often referred to as the beginning of the First Chechen War (December 1994-August 1996). In the Kremlin's current narrative, the entire decade of the 1990s was largely one of collapse, economic distress and humiliation, where the Russian military's defeat against Chechen separatists perhaps serves as the most painful example. A recent article in the military weekly *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye* examined the conflict from a 25-year perspective, providing insights as to how this war is perceived among many Russians today.

The author begins by asserting that “the Chechen war became one of the most important events in the history of independent Russia, which largely determined the vector of the country's political development.” He goes on to claim that the Russian army “did not lose to the enemy on the battlefield, but to its own political power, and most importantly - to its own media and the public opinion formed by them.” He then describes some of the background to the conflict, suggesting that the weak federal authorities did little to stem the growing criminality within Chechnya until it was too late.

The author continues to describe the many problems once the decision was made to use military force to restore order, recalling for instance, the “disaster during the ‘New Year's assault’ of the Chechen capital on the night of 31 December to 1 January.” While the author asserts that the military was not responsible for the ensuing defeat, he does point out that “the level of training of both ordinary and command personnel of the RF Armed Forces was very low.” After describing many of the war's major battles, he recalls how Russian domestic politics (Yeltsin's re-election campaign in early 1996) led to the signing of the Khasavyurt agreements, which the author refers to as “a direct betrayal.”

In the last paragraph of the article, the author claims that “the RF Armed Forces could well have won the war, and even before the end of 1995. However, at that time, Russian authorities and society were maximally westernized.” He goes on to blame “the ‘free and independent’ media owned by various oligarchs [which] successfully imposed Western postmodernism and hatred of their own country in general and its army most of all.” The conflict in Chechnya was a tragedy for the modern Russian state and military, yet this article suggests that some may have drawn erroneous lessons. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

***“The RF Armed Forces could well have won the war, and even before the end of 1995. However, at that time, Russian authorities and society were maximally westernized...”***



A Chechen fighter runs past a burnt Russian armored personnel vehicle (BMP-2) during the battle for Grozny, Jan 1995.

Source: Mikhail Evstafiev via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Evstafiev-Chechnya-BURNED.jpg> CCA-SA 3.0

**Source:** Alexander A. Khramchikhin, “Война, проигранная по собственному желанию (War Lost by Our Own Desires),” *Nezavisimoye Voennoye Obozreniye*, 13 December 2019. [http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-12-13/1\\_1074\\_chechnya.html](http://nvo.ng.ru/realty/2019-12-13/1_1074_chechnya.html)

*...The Chechen war became one of the most important events in the history of independent Russia, which largely determined the vector of the country's political development....*

*...However, we can say for sure that the first Chechen war became a real “Russian Vietnam”: the army did not lose to the enemy on the battlefield, but to its own political power, but most importantly - to its own media and the public opinion formed by them....*

*...However, security officials convinced President Yeltsin to solve the problem by military means as soon as possible.... The level of training of both ordinary and command personnel of the RF Armed Forces was very low, there was no closed communications equipment and accurate maps of the area. At the same time, the enemy managed to prepare Grozny very well for defense. All this led to disaster during the “New Year's assault” of the Chechen capital on the night of December 31 to January 1....*

*...One of the highlights of Yeltsin's election campaign (or rather, his headquarters) was the deliberate removal of General Alexander Lebed, who was supposed to get a high post in the country's leadership and call on his supporters to vote for Yeltsin, in the first round....*

*...Many people consider the signing by Lebed of the Khasavyurt agreements a direct betrayal and a cynical desire to come to power in Russia...*

*...The RF Armed Forces could well have won the war, and even before the end of 1995. However, at that time, Russian authorities and society were maximally westernized. The power for the only time in Russian history really depended on the opinion of citizens, the parliament was in opposition to the president. Society was devoid of any ideals, while very afraid of blood. The “free and independent” media owned by various oligarchs successfully imposed Western postmodernism and hatred on their own country in general and its army most of all. In such a situation, wars are not won, regardless of the state of the army.*



## Bastion Coastal Missile Defense of Northern Sea Route

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the accompanying passage from *Rossiskaya Gazetta* discusses, the Bastion coastal missile systems are among the systems that will ensure the safety of navigation on the Northern Sea Route. The system can operate from fixed sites or as a mobile unit and are effective under harsh climate conditions. To date, they have been deployed to cover maritime choke points along the Northern Sea Route. They are usually protected by an air defense bubble.

As the passage notes, the system takes only five minutes to set up. In addition, “its missile flies up to 500 kilometers and exceeds a speed of 751 meters a second. The interval between missile launches is a total of 2.5 seconds.” To protect the northern seas, the mobile version of the system is used. Apparently, due to its mobility, a single Bastion is able to defend 600 kilometers of coastline against an enemy landing. Furthermore, “the software in its guidance system enables each missile to operate strictly against its own target.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“Several years ago, when the United States destroyer “Donald Cook” approached Crimea, it was the Bastion that brought the Americans “to their senses.” The moment a system with its two supersonic Oniks missiles was set up on shore and its Monolit-B radar reconnaissance station turned on, the destroyer’s on-board equipment warned that the ship was located within a Russian missile strike zone. The crew was not ready to further tempt fate, and the ship retreated.”***

**Source:** “Protecting the Arctic: Powerful Missile Systems are Defending the Northern Sea Route,” *Rossiskaya Gazetta*, 19 November 2019. <https://rg.ru/>

### ***Protecting the Arctic: Powerful Missile Systems are Defending the Northern Sea Route***

*Among the systems that will ensure the safety of navigation on the Northern Sea Route are the Bastion coastal missile systems. They have already been provided not only to tactical groups on the mainland portion of the Russian Polar Regions, but also to subunits situated on the archipelagos of the New Siberian and Franz Josef Land, according to Vice-Admiral Aleksandr Moiseyev, Commander of the Northern Fleet.*

*... The high effectiveness of the Bastions under harsh climatic conditions was confirmed during high-latitude exercises. This, evidently, refers to the large-scale maneuvers in the polar regions during the fall of last year. At that time our military personnel fired coastal missile systems in the Arctic for the first time. A launch of the supersonic Oniks antiship cruise missile system from Kotel’nyy Island against a naval target site located at a distance of more than 60 kilometers was successful.*

*Striking surface ships of various classes and types within landing formations, convoys, and ship and aircraft carrier groups was precisely what this coastal missile complex was designed for. The Bastion has an excellent ability to cope with individual enemy ships, and when necessary it can destroy their land-based sites. And it will do this even under conditions of intense fire and electronic warfare countermeasures.*

*Heightened interest is now being shown in the Arctic ... and the Northern Sea Route ..., not only by the states adjacent to the polar region, but also by countries that do not have direct access to the northern seas. Enormous hydrocarbon reserves are concentrated here, as are other natural and biological resources. Russia possesses large territories in the Arctic zone, and all of these riches must not only be exploited, but protected. Therefore, the latest weaponry and equipment are being deployed to the north including the Bastion missile system....*

*Only five minutes are needed to set up the coastal system. Its missile flies up to 500 kilometers and exceeds a speed of 751 meters a second. The interval between missile launches is a total of 2.5 seconds. In order to protect our northern seas, it was not necessary to deploy Bastions along the entire Arctic coastline. At certain places fixed sites are equipped for them. But for the most part the mobile version of this complex is used. Due to its mobility a single Bastion is able to defend 600 kilometers of coastline against an enemy landing. In addition, software in its guidance system enables each missile to operate strictly against its own target.*

...

*Several years ago, when the United States destroyer “Donald Cook” approached Crimea, it was the Bastion that brought the Americans “to their senses.” The moment a system with its two supersonic Oniks missiles was set up on shore and its Monolit-B radar reconnaissance station turned on, the destroyer’s on-board equipment warned that the ship was located within a Russian missile strike zone. The crew was not ready to further tempt fate, and the ship retreated.*





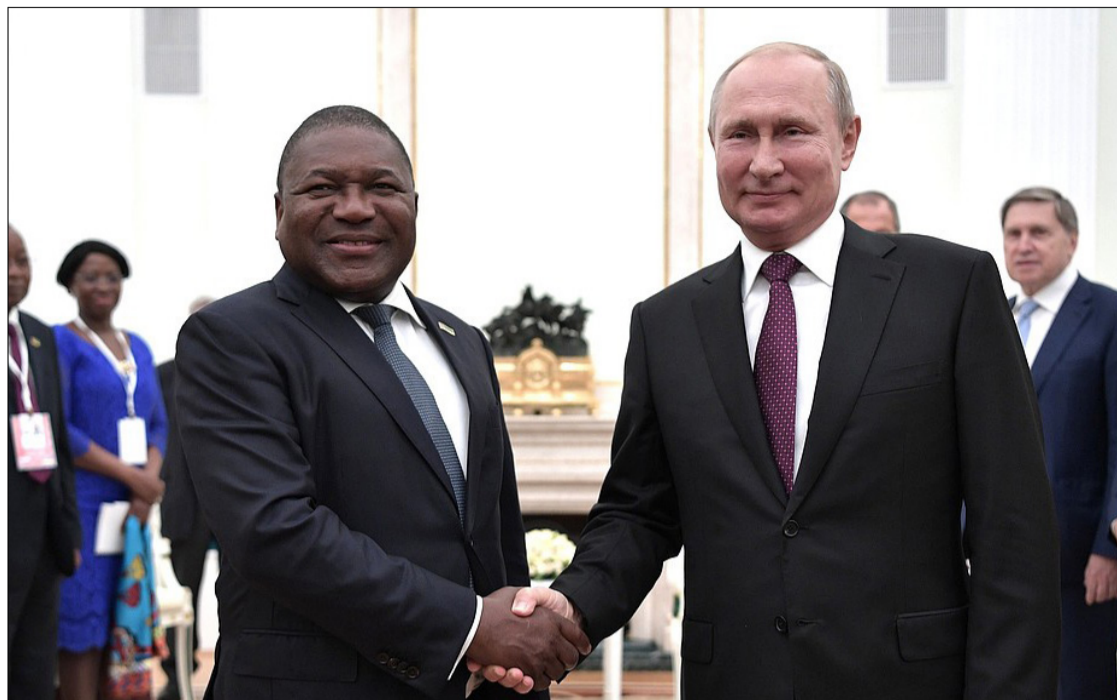
## Russia's Wagner Group Bloodied in Mozambique

**OE Watch Commentary:** As the accompanying article from the South African *Daily Maverick* explains, members of the Wagner Group - variously described as Russian paramilitary forces, mercenaries, or a unit of the Russian military, all depending on the interpretation of their degree of closeness to the Kremlin – appear to have recently been engaged in three battles with jihadists in northern Mozambique. It also appears that the Russians were on the losing end, with 11 reportedly killed, including several that were beheaded, and 25 injured.

Several reasons have been given for the Russian defeats. These include the Wagner Group members being rushed into battle without proper intelligence, training, or knowledge of the terrain. That terrain is comprised mainly of dense, impenetrable undergrowth, which presented a strong challenge to the Russians' three MI 171 SCH helicopters and assorted electronic surveillance gear.

Adding to the Russians' troubles were insurgents dressed in Mozambican army uniforms. This allowed these fake soldiers to launch a surprise attack on the unsuspecting foreigners. Part of the fallout from this is that now the Russians have a deep distrust of the Mozambican military and no longer want to do joint patrols with them.

While it is difficult to ascertain exactly what the Russians are presently doing, they appear to be at their base in Nacala retraining, acclimatizing, and gathering intelligence... all activities that would have helped prevent the deadly debacles they suffered. What they don't appear to be doing, despite reports to the contrary, is abandoning the country. As the article relates, the Russians appear to have long-term goals in Mozambique. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*The Presidents of Russia and Mozambique.*

Source: Kremlin.ru, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/61352>, CC BY-SA 4.0

***“Soldiers of the Russian private military company Wagner have retreated to Mozambique’s port city Nacala, after taking a beating in recent battles with jihadist extremists.”***

**Source:** Peter Fabricius, “Wagner private military force licks wounds in northern Mozambique,” *Daily Maverick (South Africa)*, 29 November 2019. <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-11-29-wagner-private-military-force-licks-wounds-in-northern-mozambique/>

*Soldiers of the Russian private military company Wagner, have retreated to Mozambique’s port city Nacala, after taking a beating in recent battles with jihadist extremists*

*The bodies of the first Wagner PMC soldiers killed in Mozambique were delivered to Russia this week, according to The Moscow Times. It quoted Yevgeny Shabaev, chieftain of the Khovrino Cossack society, as saying the families of those killed had been given “impressive” monetary compensation in exchange for their silence about the deaths.*

*At a seminar in Pretoria on Wednesday organised by the European Union and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) it emerged that experts are still not completely clear how to characterise the “faceless” insurgency in northern Mozambique. 4*

*It erupted in October 2017 with well-coordinated attacks on police stations and other government installations but since then most of the attacks – up to 300 of them – have been on unarmed villagers in which about 500 have been killed, often very brutally by beheading and other mutilations*



## New Intercontinental Missile to Undergo Testing in 2020

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Plesetsk Cosmodrome, founded in 1957 is a veteran launch site for the Soviet and Russian missile programs. Its high latitude dictated that most of the famous Soviet-era launches were from Baikonaur Cosmodrome in what is Kazakhstan today. Russia now rents Baikonaur from Kazakhstan, but has increased its missile activity in Plesetsk. As the accompanying passage discusses, Russia is preparing to conduct at least five tests of its new ballistic missile from Plesetsk next year. Plesetsk has tested components of the Satan-2 before this latest scheduled testing (See: “Russia Tests New ICBM Component in Arctic,” *OE Watch*, February 2018). The Satan-2 will replace the SS-18 Satan ICBM. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“The Russian government says the new missile can carry a payload of up to 15 warheads, has a range of 10,000 kilometers and is capable of destroying an area the size of Texas.”***

**Source:** “Russia prepares largest-ever ‘Satan-2’ ballistic missile tests from Plesetsk,” *The Moscow Times* republished by *The Barents Sea Independent Observer*, 3 November 2019. <https://thebarentsobserver.com/en/security/2019/11/russia-prepares-largest-ever-satan-2-ballistic-missile-tests-plesetsk>

### ***Russia prepares largest-ever ‘Satan-2’ ballistic missile tests from Plesetsk***

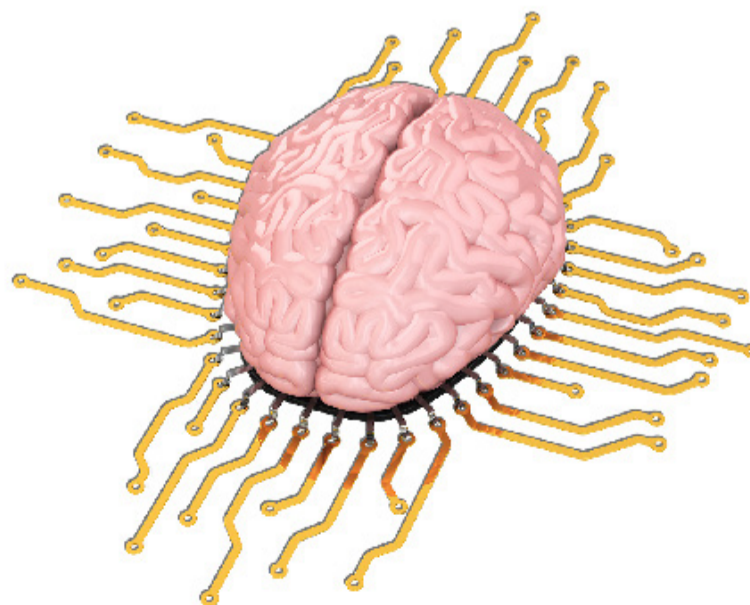
*Russia is preparing to conduct at least five tests next year of its new ballistic missile that has been called the largest missile in history... President Vladimir Putin unveiled the Sarmat missile, also called Satan-2 by NATO, at an annual address last year that reportedly riled U.S. President Donald Trump. [Sarmat is Sarmatian in Russian—a Persian confederation that existed on the Eurasian steppe as part of the larger Scythian culture]. Russia went on to test-launch the ICBM from Plesetsk Cosmodrome in Arkhangelsk region last March to study its behavior during takeoff.*

*The initial stage of testing involves two missile launches with mock warheads from a silo-installation at the Plesetsk cosmodrome towards the Kura training ground in Kamchatka. At least five launches are planned from Plesetsk. “The missile system will be put into service in 2021 if it meets the required conditions,” according to an unnamed source close to Russia’s Defense Ministry...Sarmat’s developers have encountered a series of technical and logistical difficulties that have delayed previous tests.... Russia is planning to enter Sarmat into service next year as a part of its ongoing push to modernize its nuclear arsenal. The Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) is reportedly equipped with multiple hypersonic warheads MIRVs that help it evade missile defense systems.*

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## Assessing Operation Tsentr

**OE Watch Commentary:** “Tsentr-2019’ was the Central Military District’s turn to host Russia’s annual autumn strategic-operational exercise. It preceded the national strategic nuclear exercise (Grom-19) and, although scripted, provided the opportunity to move, coordinate and support a nation-wide effort in a specific region. Thus, it was a major test of communications, logistics, transport and military planning. The annual national exercise is also becoming a test of the ability of other Federal Agencies to work with the Ministry of Defense and local commanders for territorial and civil defense. What was unique was the representation of countries in the counter-terrorism exercise: Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The intended message is that Central Asia and its immediate neighbors can deal with their own regional security problems. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***““Tsentr-2019” ... occurred in the Central Military District from 16 through 21 September in accordance with the Armed Forces Training Plan.... Personnel of the Central Military District, Southern Military District’s Caspian Flotilla, and also a portion of the Eastern Military District forces, the Airborne Troops, and Long Range and Military Transport Aviation were involved in the maneuvers. More than 128,000 servicemen, over 21,000 weapons and military vehicles and equipment, 15 combat ships, and 34 support vessels participated.”***

**Source:** Aleksandr Tikhonov: “‘Tsentr-2019’: The exercise’s goals were achieved. The troops demonstrated high skill and revealed the capability to operate unconventionally in a difficult situation,” *Krasnaya Zvezda*, 18 November 2019. [redstar.ru/tsentr-2019-tseli-ucheniya-dostignuty/](http://redstar.ru/tsentr-2019-tseli-ucheniya-dostignuty/)

### ***‘Tsentr-2019’: The Exercise’s Goals were achieved***

*Russian Defense Minister General of the Army Sergey Shoygu summed up the results of the “Tsentr-2019” Strategic Command-Staff Exercise at the RF National Defense Command and Control Center. New techniques of the troops actions were developed, an experiment of a new type of Airborne Troops formation was conducted, and coordination among the Russian Federation’s various departments along with the forces and command and control agencies of the contingents of the armed forces of the countries, which participated in the exercise, were organized during the course of the exercise.... Tactical activity was conducted at eight Russian ranges, four ranges of Kazakhstan, two – of Tajikistan, and one range in Kyrgyzstan.*

*Strategic command-staff exercises are conducted annually in each military district in turn. The very designations of the previous exercises attest to the location and time of their conduct: “Kavkaz-2016”, “Zapad-2017”, and “Vostok-2018”. Those exercises were also large-scale events. However, there are quite a few differences when comparing these exercises to “Tsentr-2019”, since quite a bit was being done either for the first time or for the first time since Soviet times.*

*General Shoygu stated “The distinctive feature of the exercise consisted of the creation of a coalition counterterrorist troop grouping, which represents Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan”.... The fact that these countries considered it possible and necessary to send their military contingents to participate in a strategic exercise that is being conducted in the Russian Federation attests to their potential readiness to merge their military potentials with ours to counter those threats, which exist and can increase (or can appear) in the Central Asian Region. There is a common goal to preserve stability in Central Asia and the capability to do this through joint efforts....*

*The massive deployment – in the initial phase – of aircraft and other combined formations – was one of the more distinctive feature of this exercise. “In the initial phase, 282 aircraft were deployed, including from Western and Southern Military Districts, to operational airfields at a distance of more than 1,500 kilometers... An aircraft grouping, which numbered approximately 600 aircraft, including 15 aircraft and eight helicopters of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, was created”.*

*“Tsentr-2019’s” third key feature was the successful drop of a full-strength parachute regiment with more than 200 vehicles, weapons systems and special equipment. This was the first large-scale drop since the ... “Zapad-81” Exercise. “A total of 71 Il-76 aircraft simultaneously participated in the large-scale operation”....*

*Five federal agencies... – a total of more than 3,000 men and approximately 400 pieces of equipment – participated in the exercise working on issues of the planning and accomplishment of joint operations of territorial and civil defense. Per General Shoygu, “This permitted us to increase the level of interdepartmental coordination and to assess the real capabilities of the federal agencies during work in wartime conditions,”.... Additionally, more than 120 military attachés from 75 countries observed the exercise’s active phase at Donguz Range.*



## Russia Arming UAVs

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian armed forces have been playing catch-up with the United States on the development and fielding of unmanned aerial vehicles. The Russians developed their UAVs as reconnaissance assets. Due to the lag in supply versus demand, Russian UAVs have been confined to reconnaissance missions. Initially, they were deployed as single assets, but are now experimenting with tactical drone hunting groups. The Orlan-10 can carry limited armaments, but its capability is still limited. The combat model of the Forpost has been under development for a while and the first article discusses two additional armed UAVs under development. The second article, from 2018, discusses the attack version of the Forpost. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“At the Tsentr-2019 exercises, which were held at the end of September, Russian Army fighters rehearsed elements of the “war of the future” -- the actions of UAV strike groups, for the first time.... During the maneuvers, the drones, using radio-technical reconnaissance equipment and radars, conducted “combat actions” autonomously, without resorting to the aid of other weapons systems. The UAVs went on the hunt for air defense assets, as well as a probable enemy’s command, control and communications centers....”***

**Source:** Aleksei Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoi, “Military rehearse drone strike actions for the first time,” *Izvestia*, 7 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/920524/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/vysshii-bespiotazh-voennye-vpervye-otrabotali-deistviia-udarnykh-grupp-dronov>

### ***Military rehearse drone strike actions for the first time***

*Separate detachments of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) took part in the maneuvers, among which a strike group was selected, which was responsible for destroying the most important targets. The drones had to keep one of the hypothetical enemy troops’ concentration areas in constant tension. On the battlefield, they independently searched for targets, classified, and destroyed them.*

*Important facilities in the rear of the probable enemy -- headquarters and communications centers, were first to be subjected to the attacks. After that -- transport infrastructure. In addition, the drones actively interfered with the approach of the reserves. Especially valuable military equipment -- frontline air defense systems, were not left without attention either.*

*The former commander of the 4th Air Force and Air Defense Army, Hero of Russia, Lieutenant General Valeriy Gorbenko, believes that the exercises allowed the military to inspect the capabilities of UAVs and work through the nuances of their employment. “The existing UAVs are difficult to detect. For this reason, the equipment is causing many problems for air defense assets. Even a poorly armed drone can inflict losses, destroy or damage expensive equipment. Although they are still more dangerous as aerial reconnaissance and fire adjustment assets.”....*

### ***Armed UAVs***

*The largest army mass-produced UAV, Orlan-10, can carry munitions on board. military expert Anton Lavrov stated “The flight range of such vehicles allows them to conduct actions at a depth of up to 100 km. This makes it possible for the UAVs to deliver strikes in the enemy’s operational rear and to keep several dozen kilometers of the front-line in suspense. Their bombs are by no means powerful, but a precise strike can disable equipment, fuel depots, or ammunition storage. In the future, the role of UAVs on the battlefield will only increase.*

### ***Orlan-10’s accuracy***

*The Orlan-10 is a well-known UAV in the Army. Its full production began several years ago, and it received its baptism by fire in Syria. The technical characteristics of the UAV make it possible to conduct lengthy search and strike operations. The vehicle is capable of being in the air for up to 14 hours, rising to a height of up to 5,000 meters. The device can independently conduct electronic or visual reconnaissance. It can detect and determine the coordinates of targets by detecting signals of cell phones and wireless devices. The new model of the Orlan is equipped with 12 high-resolution cameras. This allows to detect a target and acquire it for visual tracking.*

*During an attack, the drone destroys facilities using bombs or special guided missiles, situated on board in small containers. The video cameras make it possible to verify the destruction of the target. Orlans are usually deployed in attack groups, which include several UAVs. A UAV formation deploys with one of the vehicles conducting visual reconnaissance at a distance of 1-1.5 kilometers above the ground, the second one carries the Leyer-3 REB [radioelectronic warfare] assets in order to suppress enemy ground communications equipment, and the third one relays the information to the base, from a height of 4.5 to 5 kilometers.*

*The maneuvers also involved Granat, Zastava, and Eleron UAVs, which belong to the light class of UAVs with an operation radius of up to 30 kilometers. These vehicles were responsible for battlefield reconnaissance of the terrain in the area of the enemy’s front-line and conducted patrol flights.*

*Forpost UAVs surpass the Orlan in conducting reconnaissance -- their flight range exceeds 250 kilometers. These drones are fitted with two cameras, including an infra-red one, which makes it possible to use it around the clock.*

### ***A job for the future***

*Heavier UAVs are expected in the Aerospace Forces and the Army. Tests of the Forpost-M aircraft’s combat model are being completed in the force. It will receive unique precision-guided bombs, which will be hidden in containers, barely noticeable to enemy radar station]. The vehicle will be able to carry two such munitions. The Defense Ministry is not divulging information about their characteristics and bomb capacity yet. However, it can be assumed that the load capacity of the upgraded Forpost UAV model will exceed 100 kilograms.*

*The Altius, which carried out its first flight this year, will be able to conduct patrolling operations for 48 hours at an altitude of up to 12,000 meters. Its range of operations is around 10,000 kilometers. The ultralong range radar and optoelectronic systems of the UAV will make it possible to conduct all-around observation of the water surface and the airspace from a great distance. The strike version will be able to carry powerful high-precision missiles.*

*The Okhotnik, which is considered one of the world’s most powerful strike drones, is also undergoing tests. Its characteristics are classified. But the dimensions are known: the length is 19 meters, the wingspan is 14 meters, and the weight is about 20 tons. Such dimensions will allow it to be equipped with a fairly powerful weapons system, including cruise missiles and guided aerial bombs. Vehicles of this class will significantly strengthen the Armed Forces.*





## Continued: Russia Arming UAVs

**Source:** Aleksei Ramm and Bogdan Stepovoi, "Drone Attack; Military Preparing To Adopt the First Russian Attack Drone," *Izvestia*, 24 July 2018. <https://iz.ru/765772/aleksei-ramm-bogdan-stepovoi/ataka-dronov>

### ***Drone Attack; Military Preparing To Adopt the First Russian Attack Drone***

*The Russian military is going to get an aerial attack reconnaissance robot. Trials of the military version of the Forpost-M unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) ... are drawing to a close. The upgraded machine will become a fully autonomous strike platform - the first such UAV to enter service with the Russian army. It will contain a modern radar, optical systems, and precision-guided bombs. The new equipment will allow the Forpost-M to independently find, identify, and destroy targets. Experts believe that it is possible to carry out numerous tactical missions without risking human lives with the help of the attack drones....*

*The Forpost-M drone is able to strike at ground targets. The UAV will be equipped with a new modular optical-electronic system for identification of ground objects and a radar station. This equipment allows the drone to work in hours of darkness and in all weather conditions. The combination of new navigation systems and identification of ground facilities makes the machine a fully autonomous strike platform.*

*The Forpost-M will be able to independently perform a range of combat missions when in patrol areas. The new radar will help to detect potential targets for an attack. The optical system's sights will capture and identify ground targets. An attack then ensues. The targets will be hit with the high-precision guided bombs placed on board.*

*The Forpost-M's avionics are without parallel in the world. In particular, the Russian-made strapdown inertial navigation system allows the drone to fly without the use of GLONASS or GPS global systems. This gives the machine a number of advantages when flying in areas saturated with air defense and EW systems of a likely enemy.*

*The Forpost-M ... will bring a lot of trouble to any modern army on the battlefield. The experience of using the first UAV models of this type in Syria showed that they are good at finding camouflaged enemy armored vehicles, artillery systems, and defensive and command posts. The upgraded drone will be able to immediately destroy such targets.*

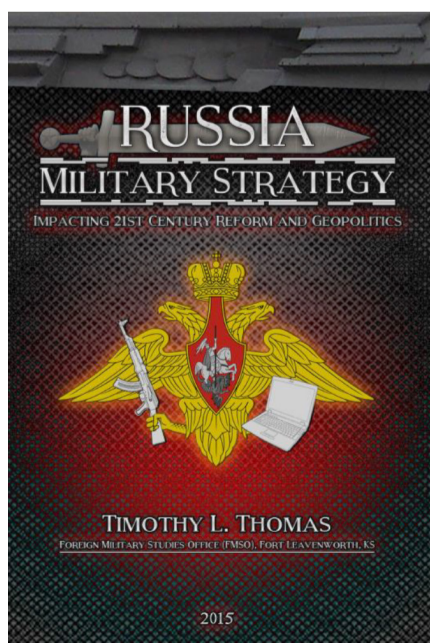
*The basis for the new attack machine was the Forpost drone created using previously purchased Israeli Searcher Mk II UAVs. Modified by Russian designers, the drone is completely assembled from domestic components and called the Forpost-M. The "M" index in its name means that the UAV has undergone modernization.*

*The Forpost-M can operate in a radius of up to 250 kilometers from the operator's location, reach a speed of more than 200 kilometers per hour, and stay in the air for up to 17 hours. The drone weighs more than 450 kilograms. Maximum altitude is about 5,000 meters.*

*The strike version of the Forpost-M will be armed with unique high-precision guided bombs. They will be kept in special containers that are not easily visible to enemy radar. The machine can carry two of these bombs. So far the Ministry of Defense is not disclosing the specifications of the aircraft's special ordnance and bomb load. However, the payload of the upgraded version of the Forpost UAV will presumably exceed 100 kilograms.*

*Modern armies cannot manage without attack drones, military expert Anton Lavrov believes. "Using attack drones, it is possible to carry out numerous tactical missions without risking human lives... "guided bombs are good for attacking stationary targets - field fortifications, buildings, and also military equipment in positions."*

*The Russian Federation Armed Forces are also preparing to adopt attack drones that are heavier than the Forpost-M. Testing is actively under way on the first Russian-made attack drones the Altair, weighing up to five tonnes, and the Okhotnik, weighing up to 20 tonnes. It is made according to a "flying wing" design using stealth technology.*



### **RUSSIA MILITARY STRATEGY: IMPACTING 21ST CENTURY REFORM AND GEOPOLITICS by TIMOTHY L. THOMAS**

Russian military's main tasks are to maintain the combat readiness of the Armed Forces and to ensure the Russian Federation's defensive capability. Russia's military heritage will assist this process tremendously. Combat readiness includes updated strategic thought, new equipment revelations, and future-war projections. Defensive capability includes not just protecting Russia's territory, but also the security of the nation's national interests and conduct of geopolitics. Capturing the essence of these developments is the goal of this book. In the process a few templates for understanding Russian military thought and actions are offered for further consideration and use.

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## Russian Antarctic Expedition

**OE Watch Commentary:** Although Russia focuses its media and resources on the Arctic, it has long been involved in Antarctica too. Russia has maintained *Vostok* station as a year-round research site since 1957. *Vostok* is located at the southern Pole of Cold—the coldest place on the planet where the temperature has measured -89.2° Centigrade [-128.6° Fahrenheit]. The country also conducts an annual Antarctic scientific shipboard expedition. This year’s expedition includes naval cadets who will get a good taste of cold water navigation. Usually these expeditions go without a hitch, however in 2013, the Russians made headlines when the *Akademik Shokolskiy* became stuck in Antarctic waters and the US, China, France and Australia had to rescue its passengers. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

**“Russian explorers plan to update the position of the South Magnetic Pole – the arbitrary point on the planet’s surface, in which the Earth’s magnetic field is directed strictly upward.”**

**Source:** Olga Kolentsova and Aleksey Kozachenko, “We Will Have Something To Say to the World Scientific Community”-Interview with Navy Commander-in-Chief Admiral Nikolay Anatolyevich Yevmenov, *Izvestia*, 3 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/>

### ***We Will Have Something to say to the World Scientific Community***

*[Kolentsova/Kozachenko] Nikolay Anatolyevich, today the sendoffs are occurring for the Russian Navy Oceanographic Research Vessel “Admiral Vladimirskiy” on the Antarctic Expedition. Please tell us, how did the idea of the circumnavigation emerge?*

*[Yevmenov] The Russian Fleet and later the Russian Navy over the course of centuries has occupied the leading positions in the exploration of the seas and oceans. These positions continue to be strengthened even today. In accordance with the decision of Russian Federation Defense Minister General of the Army S.K. Shoygu, the conduct of the circumnavigational oceanographic expedition has been planned from December 2019 to June 2020. It is dedicated to the 200th Anniversary of the Discovery of Antarctica and the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of I.F. Krusenstern. Our round-the-world cruise will continue the traditions of domestic seafaring. The Expedition’s Plan was painstakingly developed by the Navy Main Command.*

*[Kolentsova/Kozachenko] Which vessels, besides the “Admiral Vladimirskiy”, will participate in the expeditions?*

*[Yevmenov] The Oceanographic Research Vessel “Admiral Vladimirskiy” will be the first to depart Kronshtadt... During the course of the expedition, the Hydrographic Vessel “Marshal Gelovani” and the Oceanographic Research Vessel “Yantar” will join it on certain sectors of the route. The expedition’s route is planned so that the “Admiral Vladimirskiy” and the “Yantar” will arrive at the Russian “Bellingshausen” Antarctic Station, where commemorative events will occur, on 28 January of next year, the Day of the Discovery of Antarctica....*

*The “Admiral Vladimirskiy’s” path will pass across the Atlantic Ocean to Antarctica and later return across the Southern (Antarctic) and Indian Oceans, and the Mediterranean Sea. It will have to sail a distance over more than 40,000 nautical miles. All of the vessels will visit the ports of foreign states along the travel route – among them are Lisbon, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo, Messina, Port Victoria, and Limassol, and many others...*

*[Kolentsova/Kozachenko] What are the expedition’s main goals?*

*[Yevmenov] ... In accordance with the Russian Federation’s international obligations on the creation of navigation charts and keeping them up to date, we envision the accomplishment of hydrographic work (surveying the bottom topography and observation of the sea level) during the course of the expedition in the Bellingshausen Sea. The materials of this work will permit the republication of the Russian Navigation Chart INT9172 that was published in 1998. The data on the underway surveys will be used to update the information on the navigation charts of all of the seas and oceans.*

*They plan to accomplish work to update the location of the South Magnetic Pole in the D’Urville Sea. The vessels’ ... plan to get unique bathymetric data, conduct oceanographic and hydrometeorological research in the seas, which wash Antarctica, which will permit the substantial augmentation of the climate data bases....All of the data that has been obtained during the course of the expedition will be analyzed by the RF Ministry of Defense Navigation and Oceanography Directorate and the Navy Hydrographic Service in cooperation with the profile scientific organizations....*

*[Kolentsova/Kozachenko] Who, besides the scientists and the vessels’ crews, will participate in the expedition?*

*[Yevmenov] Fourteen cadets of the Naval Corps of Peter the Great Navigation-Hydrographic Department will participate in the expedition. This is a unique practical experience of hydrographic exploration for them, which is important for the cadets’ future growth. I am confident that they will arrive in the fleets as professional practitioners after this cruise and the completion of their studies. The Navy is very closely cooperating with the Russian Geographic Society in this expedition. This cooperation is very effective and that is how it has been since the times of the founding of the Russian Geographic Society. We work together on all projects, which concern the multiplication of the traditions of the history of Russian navigation....*

*“Russian explorers plan to update the position of the South Magnetic Pole – the arbitrary point on the planet’s surface, in which the Earth’s magnetic field is directed strictly upward. This work is among the missions of the Antarctic Expedition, which is dedicated to the 200th Anniversary of the Discovery of Antarctica by Admirals F.F. Bellingshausen and M.P. Lazarev and the 250th Anniversary of the Birth of I.F. Krusenstern. The first vessel of the round-the-world cruise will depart from Kronshtadt on 3 December. During the course of the expedition, they plan to use only Russian equipment for the hydrographic and hydrologic explorations...”*





## Russia Developing Challenge to Aircraft Carriers

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Zircon has not yet been accepted by the Russian military-industrial complex, but its capabilities are being touted. *Moscow Rossiyskaya Gazeta* is a Russian government newspaper, so why the positive write-up if the hypersonic anti-ship missile isn't cleared for production? At this point, it is probably a financial problem. Russia already has anti-ship missiles, torpedoes and mines in its inventory. The Zircon is expensive and there are lots of other important projects awaiting development. The Russian Navy is a green water navy and is never the best-financed Russian armed service. In the expanded article, the author states that the new Yasen-class submarine could carry 40 Zircons and the Antey-class submarine could carry 24. Frigates and other ships can carry up to 16 launchers and Bastion land-based coastal defense units can be upgraded for the Zircon. The Russian government is watching its rubles. The Brezhnev administration spent so much money in an attempt to match the United States, that it broke the system. President Putin lived through that period. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“The missile... has a flight speed of Mach 8-10 and is capable of precisely destroying surface targets at ranges of from 500 to 1,000 kilometers or more. The “Zircon” was developed to penetrate existing and advanced ship-based missile defense] and air defense systems.”***

**Source:** Aleksey Leonkov “The Unpredictable ‘Zircon’ Will Challenge the Domination of the Carrier Strike Groups,” *Moscow Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 6 December 2019. <https://rg.ru/2019/12/06/nepredskazuemyj-cirkon-osporit-dominirovanie-avianosnyh-udarnyh-grupp.html>

### ***The Unpredictable ‘Zircon’ Will Challenge the Domination of the Carrier Strike Groups***

*Will the Zircon anti-ship missile change the balance of power at sea? Certainly – yes, because its characteristics will end the domination by carrier strike groups for several reasons. First of all, the multifunction integrated radar of the probable enemy’s leading-edge ships and the radar of the ship-based air defense systems will not be able to provide target designations to the weapon systems due to the time constraints of the operation of the pair of “weapons radar” in cases where the detection of the hypersonic anti-missile at a distance of 20-25 kilometers (the visible horizon). The Zircon travels this distance in less than 10 seconds.*

*Second, if the ships’ radar and the radar of the early radar warning aircraft that have advanced 150 nautical miles from the ship detect the Zircon, then the latest RIM-174 SM-6 ERAM air defense missile with an active- seeker head could be launched against the target at a speed of Mach 3.5. This will not accomplish the interception mission for interception either on a head-on course (the impact velocities should be equal), or by pursuing the target (the speed of the pursuing missile must be 1.5 times greater than the target). In the process, Zircon’s active maneuvering at hypersonic speed will constantly break the RIM-174 seeker head’s lock-on. Dozens of air defense missiles will be required for the interception of one “Tsirkon”, but the interception of our anti-ship missile is not guaranteed even with that expenditure. What is more, the Zircon is a flock missile – several dozen anti-ship missiles will fly to destroy the carrier strike group. The interception of all these missiles would be a nightmare for the shipborne radar and air defense systems which are defending the carrier strike group’s flagship – the aircraft carrier.*

*Third, the missile doesn’t react to active EW countermeasures. It is practically impossible to break its target lock-on by jamming. So, the probable enemy will have to conduct expensive and many-years of work for the modernization of the shipborne radar and the air defense missiles in order to destroy attacking hypersonic anti-ship missiles....*

*President Putin stated “In the next few years, we need to actively build up the Navy’s combat capabilities. This largely depends on the planned entry of frigates and submarines, which have been upgraded for the employment of the Zircon hypersonic missiles, into the Navy’s fighting strength. This weapon is becoming extremely important for the maintenance of strategic stability*

*By 2030, there could ... be more than 500 launchers with Zircon antiship missiles...in the Russian Navy. What will Russian get as a result of this weapon? First of all, an A2/AD [Anti-Access/Area Denial] zone (access and maneuver denial) will extend to a distance of up to 4,000 nautical miles along Russia’s maritime borders. We will be able to finally close our offshore maritime defense zone, and create obstacles for the deployment of Carrier Strike Groups and Formations in the remote naval zone. Second, Zircon will ... impact the probable enemy’s weapons programs. The well-known American Publication *The National Interest* in the article “Obsolete or A Real Killer: Can We Save the Aircraft Carrier?” ... states that the Zircon will keep carriers in danger because they will be launched beyond striking distance of carrier-based aircraft.*

*In any case, when Russia developed and introduced controlled hypersonic technology, it was able to change the balance of power that had taken a turn for the worse not only in the nuclear weapons sphere but also in the precision-guided weapons sphere. It created an equilibrium when the number of weapons near our borders that is growing, was balanced by a comparatively small number of high-quality weapons.*



## Upgraded Firepower on the Pacific

**OE Watch Commentary:** Historically, the Soviet Union would always introduce its latest weapons in the Far East for field testing and soldier-proofing before issuing the final combat-ready models in Eastern Europe. The new kit did not stay in the Far East. Rather, the bulk of the Far East units were equipped with the older equipment. The Eastern Military District still does not get all the latest equipment, but the Russian military is making the effort to upgrade its eastern force. The T-80BVM tank is a definite upgrade for the district. It is equivalent to the T-72B3 or the T-90M, just not ideal for mountains. As the accompanying passage from *Izvestia* discusses, Russia is making an effort to assign the T-80BVM to the coldest regions. (Also see “Arctic Tank Modernization Continues,” *OE Watch*, March 2019.) **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***““Jet-propelled” tanks will defend Sakhalin’s coasts and will pulverize an enemy assault force, if necessary. The firepower of the modernized T-80BVM tanks ... can ... destroy armored vehicles and also sink enemy ships. These tanks have gas-turbine engines ... instead of the regular diesel engines on most armored vehicles. The gas turbine engines sound like helicopter engines during start-up and troops have nicknamed the T-80s “jet-propelled”. The gas-turbine engine starts and operates without problems in temperatures 50 degrees below zero....”***

**Source:** Aleksei Ramm and Aleksei Kosachenko “Island can strike Ships: Tanks can now sink an Enemy Fleet. Modernized T-80s Will Increase the Combat Power of the Force on Sakhalin,” *Izvestia*, 15 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/939972/aleksei-ramm-aleksei-kozachenko/ostrov-popavshikh-v-korabli-tanki-teper-mogut-topit-flot-protivnika>

### ***Modernized T-80s Will Increase the Combat Power of the Force on Sakhalin***

*The 39th Separate Motorized Rifle Brigade, which is based on Sakhalin, will be completely equipped with T-80BVM tanks by the end of 2019... The brigade’s primary mission is to repel an amphibious assault on the island in the event of a military conflict. The most effective way is to destroy the enemy at the remote approaches. And the T-80BVM is precisely suited for this, Military Historian Dmitriy Boltenev stated: “In the Soviet years, a coastal missile-artillery regiment and a brigade were deployed on Sakhalin. Serious forces were deployed there throughout the course of the entire history – Japanese troops repeatedly disembarked on the island during the wars. There are many suitable locations for the conduct of an amphibious operation. Thanks to their high performance, the T-80s are capable of conducting lengthy road marches and monitoring practically the entire coastline. The modernized tanks have powerful weapons, which can effectively combat naval targets and an enemy that has already come ashore.*

*Armored vehicles in the Far East are undergoing serious modernization to the T-80BVM level. The T-80 was accepted into the inventory back in the mid-1970s, but the upgraded vehicle meets the most contemporary requirements ... The T-80BVM has the state-of-the-art “Sosna-U” Fire Control System with a thermal imaging device, laser rangefinder, and an automated target tracker.... The vehicle can fire ... the “Refleks” guided weapon system, which can destroy naval targets at great distances. The system guides supersonic missiles, which are launched from the gun’s tube, to the target using a laser beam. Their flight range totals approximately five kilometers, which is two kilometers more, than conventional tank projectiles.*

*A 125-millimeter smoothbore gun is the tanks main armament. There are also machineguns – the NSVT anti-aircraft 12.7-millimeter and a coax PKT 7.62-millimeter. State-of-the-art reactive armor and anti-shaped charge screens protect the T-80BVM from enemy projectiles and missiles.*

*The troops have nicknamed these tanks jet-propelled for their special “helicopter” sound, which the T-80BVM engine emits on start-up. But the T-80 becomes practically silent when moving, in contrast to diesel vehicles...The gas-turbine power plants are easy to start even in deep frost. In the process, the vehicles’ operational readiness is achieved in a matter of minutes. In comparison, diesel engines require up to 40 minutes to warm up before use. However, the tank’s gas-turbine engine is very sensitive to dust and loses power in alpine conditions. This should not be a problem on Sakhalin where the air is clean and there are no mountains.*

*The gas-turbine engine provides the T-80BVM with unique speed and maneuvering characteristics. Thanks to the high mobility, the tanks can patrol the entire coastline. This will permit the immediate redeployment of the weapons to threatened axes....*





## The Kazakhstan Battalion: The Movie

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the past few years, there has been increasing interest in Kazakhstan about the country's contribution to the Commonwealth of Independent States' (CIS) peacekeeping force that deployed to Tajikistan during the civil war there (1992-1997). The Kazakh government has erected monuments in a few cities for members of an Interior Ministry unit that were killed during an ambush in 1995 on the Afghan-Tajik border. As the accompanying excerpted article from *Tengri News* discusses, the incident has now been made into a movie entitled "Kazbat," which was recently released in theatres in Kazakhstan.

The article provides some background information on the incident and how the producers "used real weapons and military equipment" during filming. It notes how helicopters had been "provided by the KNB [Kazakhstan National Security Service] Border Guard service," that "the Minister of Internal Affairs Erlan Turgumbayev personally provided help in the making of the movie" as well as how "several hundred active members of the National Guard were involved."

Kazakhstan's Ministry of Defense (MoD) provided support in past years to the production of a dramatic TV series about the lives of soldiers and to a reality show, the latter of which involved celebrities going through training, living in barracks and competing in various military-related tasks. The MoD stated that its involvement in these shows helped public relations for the armed forces.

The article does not mention whether the MoD provided support to the recently released movie, but the title is worth noting. The battalion from Kazakhstan that made up part of the CIS force has not been previously referred to as "Kazbat." Kazakhstan's Peacekeeping Battalion (KAZBAT) has been an ongoing effort of the Kazakh government to develop a peacekeeping battalion within the army (MoD) capable of deploying on NATO or UN peacekeeping missions. A company from KAZBAT is currently deployed with the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The movie demonstrates another effort to commemorate the peacekeeping unit that deployed to Tajikistan and to enhance the status of Kazakhstan's military. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

***"The filmmakers noted that for maximum realism, they used real weapons and military equipment."***



*Soldiers from the Kazakhstani military communicate with a civilian role-player while conducting camp security operations during Steppe Eagle 2013 at the Iliskiy Training Center on Aug. 12.*

Source: Sgt. Lauren Twigg via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sorry,\\_no\\_entry\\_130812-Z-TA763-020.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sorry,_no_entry_130812-Z-TA763-020.jpg), Public Domain

**Source:** Shokan Alkhabayev, "“Казбат”. Как снимали фильм о казахстанцах, погибших на афганско-таджикской границе (“Kazbat”. How they made a movie about the Kazakhs killed on the Afghan-Tajik border),” *Tengri News*, 19 November 2019. <https://tengrinews.kz/cinema/kazbat-snimali-film-kazahstantsah-pogibshih-afgansko-384380/>

*The new military drama film “Kazbat,” about events on the Afghan-Tajik border which took place in 1995, is being released in theaters...The movie depicts Kazakh soldiers who participated in a peacekeeping mission (in Tajikistan)...The seventh company, made up largely of soldiers from Shymkent, took part in combat in the Pshikharv Valley. As a result, 17 soldiers were killed and 33 were injured.*

*“On April 7, 1995, a group attacked from the Afghan border, hoping to break through within an hour. However, the battle went on for five hours and they were forced to withdraw...”*

*...The filmmakers noted that for maximum realism, they used real weapons and military equipment. Also, three helicopters provided by the KNB Border Guard service were used. The Minister of Internal Affairs Erlan Turgumbayev personally provided help in the making of the movie. With his support, several hundred active members of the National Guard were involved...The movie “Kazbat” is being released on November 21...*

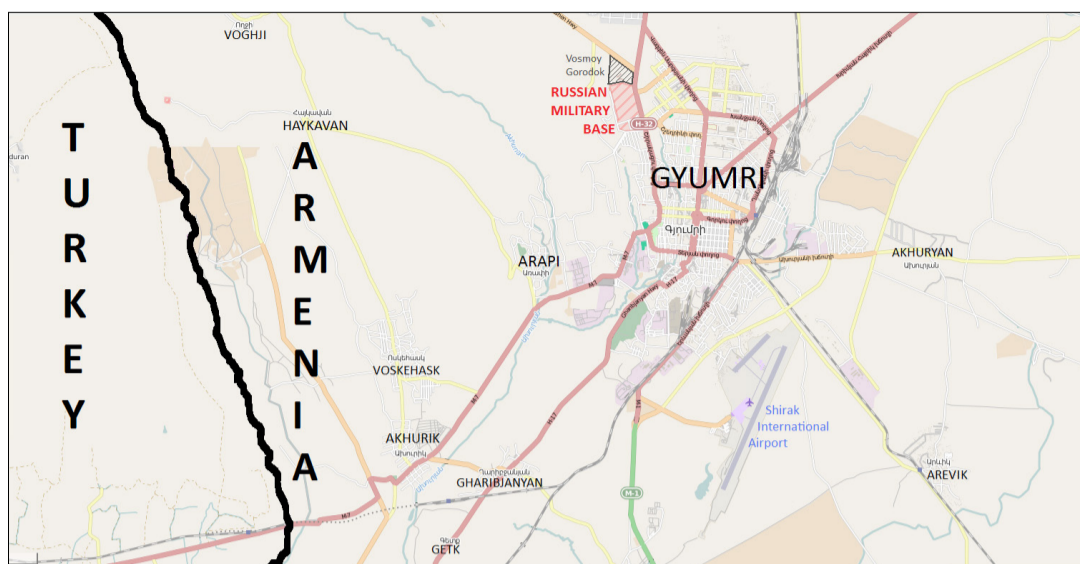


## Turkish Plans for an Operation against Armenia

**OE Watch Commentary:** An article recently published on the website of *Nordic Monitor*, an organization that tracks and reports on security issues in Europe, reported on a leaked document from the Turkish General Staff on plans to carry out airstrikes on Armenia as part of an operation in the event of a conflict. The accompanying excerpted articles report on the reaction to the leak from sources in Armenia and the region.

The article from *EA Daily* reports how *Nordic Monitor* has “a copy of an internal note of the Turkish General Staff dated 23 May 2016, which mentioned missing pages of a plan of an operation against Armenia.” The internal note which *Nordic Monitor* obtained appears to be one of two leaks, the other being the pages of the plans of the operation, which were found missing on “4 May 2016 during a document check at the Akıncı airbase near Ankara.” The article mentions that the “Turkish military planned to launch air strikes on Armenia as part of an operation codenamed Oğuztürk” and that the plan for the operation “reportedly remains in effect.”

The article from *Lragir* shows the Armenian reaction to the *Nordic Monitor* report, including how some believe it “is not a surprise for anyone” and that it “would be strange if this kind of plan was not developed.” The author sees the leak as a way to “demonstrate to Russia the reality of the Turkish threat” and mentions how the “leak came after the statement in Yerevan by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu to increase the strength of the base in Gyumri.” It is unknown how much the Russian government might increase the strength of the Russian forces at Gyumri and while the leak of the Turkish government’s plans may not have surprised many in Armenia, it would be worth watching how it could impact the Armenian government’s ongoing defense reforms. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



The city of Gyumri and important military and civil structures in its vicinity (e.g. the Russian base) and the Turkish-Armenian border.

Source: Open Street Map Contributors via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gyumri\\_and\\_its\\_vicinity.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gyumri_and_its_vicinity.png), CC BY SA 2.0

**“It is also worth noting that the leak came after the statement in Yerevan by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu to increase the strength of the base in Gyumri.”**

**Source:** “Abdullah Bozkurt, “Turkey Planned Military Action against Armenia,” *Nordic Monitor*, 27 November 2019. <https://www.nordicmonitor.com/2019/11/turkish-military-planned-military-action-against-armenia/>

*Turkey planned a military operation against Armenia code-named ALTAY, according to a secret memo that reported missing pages from classified documents which detailed action plan.*

*The internal memo, submitted to the General Staff and a copy of which was obtained by Nordic Monitor, stated that the plan was still valid.*

*According to the memo, dated May 23, 2016 and presented to the General Staff by the Directorate of Operations, some of the pages that included air strike operations against Armenia called OĞUZTÜRK Hava Harekât Planı (OĞUZTÜRK Air Operation Plan) had gone missing. The discovery was made during a review of the plans at the Controlled Documents Bureau by the 4th Main Jet Base Command at Ankara’s Akıncı Air Base. A legal investigation was launched into the incident.*

**Source:** Arshaluis Mgdesyanyan, “Турция планировала удар по Армении: Ереван проверяет информацию (Turkey planned a strike on Armenia: Yerevan is verifying the information),” *EA Daily*, 2 December 2019. <https://eadaaily.com/ru/news/2019/12/02/turciya-planirovala-udar-po-armenii-erevan-proveryaet-informaciyu>

*The Ministry of Defense of Armenian and other state agencies are verifying secret materials recently published by the Swedish website Nordic Monitor, which provided evidence of plans by the Turkish military leadership to conduct an airstrike against Armenia. This was stated in an interview with EA Daily by a source in the Armenian military.*

*In the hands of Nordic Monitor is a copy of an internal note of the Turkish General Staff date 23 May 2016, which mentioned missing pages of a plan of an operation against Armenia. According to information, the Turkish military planned to launch air strikes on Armenia as part of an operation codenamed Oğuztürk. The air strike plan was approved in July 2001. The loss of the pages of the plan was discovered on 4 May 2016 during a document check at the Akynji airbase near Ankara...(the plan) reportedly remains in effect...*

**Source:** Akop Badalyan, “Удар по Турции Арменией: секретный план разваливается (A Turkish strike on Armenia: a secret plan falls apart),” *Lragir*, 30 November 2019. <https://www.lragir.am/ru/2019/11/30/161555/>

*...The fact that Turkey could develop a plan of a strike on Armenia is not a surprise for anyone in Armenia. It would be strange if this kind of plan was not developed...in this situation, the leak itself is notable...(It) is an occasion to demonstrate to Russia the reality of the Turkish threat, which necessitates the presence of Russia at the Gyumri base. It is also worth noting that the leak came after the statement in Yerevan by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu to increase the strength of the base in Gyumri...*





## China: '5G Big Bang' will Change Society and Transform Battlefield

**OE Watch Commentary:** During the recent World 5G Conference held in the Economic and Technological Development Zone of Beijing, many Chinese high-tech companies converged to demonstrate how their innovations would ride the backbone of the fifth-generation (5G) mobile communication system. According to an article published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, (*the People's Liberation Army Daily*) once 5G is fully implemented, all things from everyday life to the battlefield are expected to change dramatically. The article describes this societal change as a "5G Big Bang." This system is deeply integrated with technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and the Internet of Things. It will bring about new applications, new platforms, and new manufacturing as well as lead to new capabilities on the battlefield. At the same time, it will lead to an increase in security threats.

Some of the more interesting developments showcased during the World 5G Conference included Qi An Xin Group's latest research and development achievement – the Qi An Xin Intelligent Security Big Data Analysis Platform. According to the article, as 5G is rolled out in its entirety, security challenges will increase. For example, key infrastructure might be more easily targeted in cyber warfare. The Intelligent Security Big Data Analysis Platform analyzes things such as human intelligent behavior, security big data, and threat intelligence to find any discrepancies or irregularities that could identify potential attacks. Another innovation on display was an intelligent patrol robot developed by JD.com. The robot, which can patrol 24 hours a day, provides live video feed, face recognition, fire warning, and detection of dangerous goods.

On the battlefield, 5G technology will facilitate command and control because of its higher capacity, which allows it to pass huge amounts of battlefield information and data, improve real-time interaction, and promote the interconnection of weapon platforms across the entire battlefield, making integrated joint operations a reality. As the article explains, integrating 5G technology with artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other cutting-edge technologies will greatly enhance the control of unmanned combat systems, leading to a vastly improved "intelligentization standard of the future battlefield." Meanwhile, as "intelligentization" becomes a reality, the security risks increase concomitantly. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**



5G.

Source: Nicosariego, Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:5g.jpg>, CC BY-SA 4.0

***“When 5G technology is integrated with artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other cutting-edge technologies, various types of unmanned combat systems will also be put under control more accurately and more effectively, thus greatly improving the intelligentization standard of the future battlefield.”***



# Continued: China: '5G Big Bang' will Change Society and Transform Battlefield

**Source:** Cheng Xue, “5G“大爆炸”：亦真亦幻 潜能无限 (The 5G ‘Big Bang’: Mixing Reality and Fantasy, Showing Endless Potential),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 6 December 2019. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-12/06/content\\_249299.htm?spm=C73544894212.P26359761204.0.0](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/2019-12/06/content_249299.htm?spm=C73544894212.P26359761204.0.0)

## ***The 5G ‘Big Bang’: Mixing Reality and Fantasy, Showing Endless Potential***

*The conference was unfolded on the theme of “5G Changes the World, 5G Creates the Future”,*

*At the booth of Huawei in the theme exhibition venue of the conference, the reporter saw the Smart Travel Integrated Service System – an item of the latest research and development achievements made public officially by China Unicom, China Eastern Airlines, and Huawei at Beijing’s Daxing International Airport. This system comprehensively applies the latest “5G + AI” technology to render three-dimensional intelligent travel service in the three realms of “walking around at the airport with one face, gaining intelligent experience with one network, and conducting baggage control with one chip”.*

*...The ground staff, using the “5G + AR” technology for double-checking the identities of boarding passengers, can quickly obtaining each passenger’s flight information by scanning his or her face...*

*“5G +”, in whichever realm it is applied, brings about the effect of exponential “fission”.*

*In addition, when “5G +” is applied to intelligent transportation, remote driving will also become possible.*

*With more 5G + scenarios arising, greater challenges to security will also come concomitantly.*

*... key infrastructure facilities will become the battlefield for cyber warfare. Real-time analysis and blocking will become more critical to cyber security in the future.*

*To meet cybersecurity challenges, the key lies in the capability of perceiving cyber attacks from hostile forces. Cyber security big data constitute the foundation for being capable of “keeping the adversary in sight”. Timely intelligence and rich databases constitute the vital core. Experts in cyber offensive and defense play a decisive role...*

*The reporter learned that the application of 5G technology in the military field will have an important impact on the future battlefield, and will further accelerate the process of military intelligent transformation—*

*5G technology will effectively facilitate battlefield command and realize accurate control...*

*When 5G technology is integrated with artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and other cutting-edge technologies, various types of unmanned combat systems will also be put under control more accurately and more effectively, thus greatly improving the intelligentization standard of the future battlefield. Yet, at the same time, risks to military data and information security will also increase concomitantly.....*



**China’s cyber policy appears to have three vectors —peace activist, espionage activist, and attack planner— that dominate China’s cyber policy. Some are always hidden from view while others are demonstrated daily. Three Faces of the Cyber Dragon is divided into sections that coincide with these vectors.**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195610/download>





## Can the PLA Change its Culture to Build More Flexible Military Forces?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Chinese military modernization has been on an uphill climb over the past three decades. While many of the country's military systems, weapons, and technologies have been improving in capability, the country still struggles at the personnel and cultural level. The following article excerpts, published in *Jiefangjun Bao*, suggest that China's army lacks flexibility, efficiency, and innovation. The author discusses four steps that the army should take to build a more flexible military force.

First, because it is impossible to make rules to regulate every possible situation, the author argues that while internal rules of the army should be honored, it is important to empower combat personnel at key stages to respond as needed and give them the autonomy to do so. Second, the author points out that goals and means are often inverted, which can be problematic. He argues that it is important to stick to the "principle of goal orientation in all areas of military building," and focus on those tasks associated with the goal of "being able to fight and win in war." Basically, stay focused on the goal. Third, the author argues that the armed forces and flow of information have been increasing exponentially, but the efficiency and flexibility of communication have decreased. He goes on to describe how to create a more effective flow of communication. Finally, he argues that the military forces should be more flexible, open to innovation, willing to change, "be the first to do something new," and create a relaxed environment that encourages innovation and tolerates failure.

Many of the issues that the author describes are the result of China's military culture. This culture may have worked under previous circumstances, but, as the author notes, under the current complex and changing battlefield environment, China needs an army that is adaptable, flexible, and innovative. It will be worth watching to see how, if, and when the leadership will loosen the reigns and tolerance, and how the forces might react and overcome some of these challenges. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

***“In modern wars, an army that can quickly adapt to the complex and changing battlefield environment will be able to seize the initiative and even win the final victory.”***

**Source:** Yan Xiaofeng, “如何塑造更加灵活的军队 (How to Shape a More Flexible Army),” *Jiefangjun Bao*, 5 December 2019. [http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2019-12/05/07/2019120507\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.81.cn/jfjbmap/content/1/2019-12/05/07/2019120507_pdf.pdf)

### ***How to Shape a More Flexible Army***

*In modern wars, an army that can quickly adapt to the complex and changing battlefield environment will be able to seize the initiative and even win the final victory.*

*Overcome the self-reinforcement of internal rules... we must not only maintain the rules' binding force, but also pay more attention to the generation of autonomy.*

*Prevent construction goals and means from being inverted... Based on this understanding, we must adhere to the principle of goal orientation in all areas of military building, and carry out various tasks closely around the goal of “being able to fight and win in war.”*

*Remove structural barriers to information flow... We should focus on enhancing the permeability of the internal structure of the military forces, creating a larger number of multi-functional combat units, reshaping cross-department and cross-level workflows, formulating decentralized command and control models, and facilitating the flow of information across nodes...*

*Resist the potential impact of conservative culture... we should consciously overcome the conservative tendency in a conscious manner. Stress should be laid on shaping the concept of innovation, cultivating a pioneering spirit of “daring to be the first to do something new”, and creating a relaxed environment that encourages innovation and tolerates failure. We should correctly understand the connotation of standardization in military building, avoid the phenomenon of formalism and mechanism, and get rid of the myth that “the more strict, the more formal”...*



## China Exploring Military Applications of Blockchain

**OE Watch Commentary:** China has now joined the ranks of countries researching blockchain as an emerging technology with a potentially disruptive influence on the military. According to the accompanying passages from the Chinese Ministry of National Defense website, blockchain has become as important as artificial intelligence, quantum information, and the Internet of Things. As a result, the authors argue that China should research the impact blockchain could have in the military domain.

Blockchain might be considered as a kind of “distributed ledger” or decentralized database. While every node within that ledger is able to display and maintain the general ledger, no one node is able to tamper with the ledger. This means that there is no third-party or primary management entity. Instead, each node maintains a “full copy of data backup.” Hence, if one node has a problem, other nodes will still continue to update and store full data records. Therefore, the theory is that “as a battle becomes increasingly fierce in contemporary warfare, command organs, communications hubs, and critical information stored there need to be deployed in a distributed form through a reliable decentralized management technology like blockchain so that they can avoid being destroyed “completely” by the enemy’s’ precision strikes.”

Blockchain can be used in both the operations and management realms of the military. The hope is that, because of its decentralized nature, its expandability, cross-network distribution, and strong encryption attributes, blockchain will enhance “the security... of the operational networks and... reduce uncertainty, diversity, and complexity within the area of military management.”

The authors point out that currently, the only mature application for blockchain is in bitcoin, a cryptocurrency. Therefore, they argue, it is important that China explore blockchain’s potential in the military domain. They go on to recommend the People’s Liberation Army adopt these three measures: “Set up overall planning for the military application of blockchains; innovate in the military application pattern of blockchains; and break through technical bottlenecks in the military application of blockchains.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

***“Blockchain has become as important as AI, quantum information, the Internet of Things, and may grow into a new generation of information technology with disruptive influence.”***

**Source:** Yuan Huimin and Li Zhifei, “区块链如何影响现代军事 (How Blockchain Will Bear on Modern Military Affairs),” *Ministry of National Defense*, 21 November 2019. [http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2019-11/21/content\\_4855311.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/jmsd/2019-11/21/content_4855311.htm)

### ***How Will Blockchains Bear on Modern Military Affairs***

*Currently, blockchain has become as important as AI, quantum information, the Internet of Things, and may grow into a new generation of information technology with disruptive influence... Therefore, it is essential for us to scientifically foresee the impact and influence that blockchains may have in the military domain, tap into the potential of blockchains’ military application, accomplish “blockchain + military” development, thus giving a strong impetus to the elevation of the military informatization and intelligentization level.*

*... As battle becomes increasingly fierce in contemporary warfare, command organs, communications hubs, and critical information stored there need to be deployed in a distributed form through a reliable decentralized management technology like blockchains so that they can avoid being destroyed “completely” by the enemy’s’ precision strikes.*

*...The explorations made by the military organizations in various countries show that the military application of blockchains may be generally divided into two major realms, that is, military operations and military management.*

*In the realm of military operations, the decentralization, expandability, cross-network distribution, and strong encryption attributes of blockchains may effectively enhance the security and invulnerability of the operational networks, and may substantially increase the resilience and robustness of the operational systems...*

*In the realm of military management, the machine trust mechanism of blockchains may reduce uncertainty, diversity, and complexity caused by human factors in the process of military management...*

*...With the exception of bitcoin, at present, there is still no other mature blockchain application cases in the civilian domain. The military application of blockchains in the military domain remains more evidently at the stage of exploration. To quicken the military application of blockchains and steadily expand the breadth and depth of application, we may consider adopting the following measures.*

*Step up overall planning for the military application of blockchains. Deeply study and verify ways of applying blockchains to the military domain. Meticulously analyze the advantages, necessity, feasibility, prospective benefits, and possible risks in the military application of blockchains. Formulate a road map for applying blockchains to the military domain, and include it in the relevant development plans of our army building.*

*Innovate in the military application pattern of blockchains...Launch preliminary tests, joint initiatives, and pilot projects first in some application fields where there are lower risks and quicker effects, such as in the domains of military logistics and human resources management...*

*Break through technical bottlenecks in the military application of blockchains. In light of the special requirements in applying blockchains to the military domain, quicken the in-depth fusion of blockchains with such advanced technologies as AI, big data, and the Internet of Things...*





## Improved Military Food Supply for PLA

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 1 December, the Chinese state media outlet *People's Liberation Army (PLA) Daily* published an article that stated the PLA's military food supply and support systems has improved. According to the article, "with the advancement of the People's Liberation Army, our support system has been gradually improving in the course of deepening national defense and military reforms. By focusing on service and improving combat effectiveness, we have continuously made new progress in terms of supply standards, support methods, food management, and cooking training." According to the article, the PLA previously changed "food standards" for military rations at least 27 times from the reform era to this year. The article also asserts that military food supplies have tripled overall since the reform era.

The PLA is utilizing vehicles and equipment for cooking and distributing food. The article states, "individual soldiers have a variety of ready-to-eat, self-heating, and collective foods. They rotate free of charge according to standards, and standardized fast foods are on the training ground. New integrated field supply equipment units, cooking trailers, self-catering cooking vehicles, staple food processing vehicles, food refrigerated and insulated vehicles have become the main force for food production when troops have military exercises and fight against emergency disasters." The vehicles and equipment can provide ground troops with sufficient means of accessing food during military drills or other non-combat environments, but this may indicate the vehicles and equipment cannot be used during wartime.

The PLA has also updated its food management system. "The army's provision of support for innovation and development is centralized by the combination of battalion, company, and life service centers, and is explored and promoted in the area of non-staple food. The food support of non-combat troops in large and medium-sized cities has been socialized. The army food management information system has been digitalized. Army food accounts have been informatized, and officers and soldiers have 'electronic nutritionists.'" Lastly, PLA soldiers are receiving additional training for cooking during combat missions. "Food support training has become a compulsory training course for all units. Garrison training, military exercises, and major military operations actively carry out adaptive food training for the field in order to improve the ability to provide food for emergency responses." Adaptive food training refers to desensitizing soldiers to foods in wildlife environments during combat missions.

A news article published over a year ago by the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post* noted that PLA troops disliked the ration packs provided to them during military exercises and drills so much that they brought their own meals instead. Citing a *PLA Daily* report about the issue, the article stated, "a survey was carried out among troops of one the PLA's ration packs containing beef and vegetables and '58 percent of the soldiers found a strong need to improve its taste, which is not only boring but also affects their appetite.'" According to the article, PLA rations during 2018 contained high energy foods like self-heated instant rice or noodles and luncheon meat. The *PLA Daily's* open admission of large numbers of soldiers disliking the rations over a year ago may have been a part of the current push to improve food supply and support systems and provide PLA soldiers with better meals. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hartnett)**



*Soldiers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, 2011.*

Source: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff via Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soldiers\\_of\\_the\\_Chinese\\_People%27s\\_Liberation\\_Army\\_-\\_2011.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Soldiers_of_the_Chinese_People%27s_Liberation_Army_-_2011.jpg), Public domain

***“With the advancement of the People’s Liberation Army, our support system has been gradually improving in the course of deepening national defense and military reforms. By focusing on service and improving combat effectiveness, we have continuously made new progress in terms of supply standards, support methods, food management, and cooking training.”***



## Continued: Improved Military Food Supply for People's Liberation Army

**Source:** Sun Xingwei & Dong Kui, "The army's supply and support system is improving," *People's Liberation Army Daily*, 1 December 2019. [http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2019-12/01/content\\_4856009.htm](http://www.mod.gov.cn/power/2019-12/01/content_4856009.htm)

*With the advancement of the People's Liberation Army, our support system has been gradually improving in the course of deepening national defense and military reforms. By focusing on service and improving combat effectiveness, we have continuously made new progress in terms of supply standards, support methods, food management, and cooking training.*

*Since the reform and opening up, they have adjusted the army's food standard 27 times and adjusted the military's food quantitative standard three times. Since the 18th National Congress of the Party, food input has continued to increase.*

*Individual soldiers have a variety of ready-to-eat, self-heating, and collective foods. They rotate free of charge according to standards, and standardized fast foods are on the training ground. New integrated field supply equipment units, cooking trailers, self-catering cooking vehicles, staple food processing vehicles, food refrigerated and insulated vehicles have become the main force for food production when troops have military exercises and fight against emergency disasters.*

*The army's provision of support for innovation and development is centralized by the combination of battalion, company, and life service centers, and is explored and promoted in the area of non-staple food. The food support of non-combat troops in large and medium-sized cities has been socialized. The army food management information system has been digitalized. Army food accounts have been informatized, and officers and soldiers have "electronic nutritionists."*

*Food support training has become a compulsory training course for all units. Garrison training, military exercises, and major military operations actively carry out adaptive food training for the field in order to improve the ability to provide food for emergency responses.*

**Source:** "Chinese soldiers' 'boring', 'tasteless' food rations come under fire," *South China Morning Post*, 5 July 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/print/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/1820207/chinese-soldiers-boring-tasteless-food-rations-come>

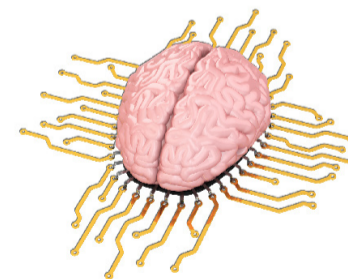
*China's military has encountered another problem as it attempts to weed out corruption and modernise its fighting forces – its soldiers don't like their food. A report in the PLA Daily newspaper has revealed that most troops dislike the ration packs they are given during military exercises and drills and bring along their own grub instead.*

*A survey was carried out among troops of one the PLA's ration packs containing beef and vegetables and '58 per cent of the soldiers found a strong need to improve its taste, which is not only boring but also affects their appetite,' the report said.*

*PLA rations packs often contain high energy foods, such self-heated instant rice or noodles and luncheon meat.*

## THE MAD SCIENTIST INITIATIVE SURVEY

The U.S. Army's Mad Scientist Initiative is conducting a short on-line survey querying your thoughts about the Operational Environment (OE). Please take about 5 minutes to complete our Global Perspectives Conference Survey by going to the Mad Scientist Laboratory blog site at: <https://madsciblog.tradoc.army.mil/> and clicking on the survey link on the sidebar at right hand side of the screen under HOT!!! We will brief back our interim findings at the Mad Scientist Global Perspectives in the Operational Environment Conference on 29 January 2020 (livestream this virtual event at: <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/watch> [note that this link is not live until the conference]). Subscribe to the Mad Scientist Laboratory blog site and watch for our post in February describing what we have gleaned from the survey regarding potential OE trends, challenges, technologies, and disruptors.







# New Russia-China Gas Pipeline Begins Operation

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia has begun providing natural gas to China via a new pipeline. The pipeline, known as the ‘Power of Siberia’ (in Chinese it is more literally translated as the “China-Russia Eastern Route Gas Pipeline” [中俄东线天然气管道]), is set to provide 5 billion cubic meters of gas in 2020. When completed, the joint project between China National Petroleum Corporation and Gazprom, which was initiated in May 2014, will reach over 8,000 kilometers across both countries and provide 38 billion cubic meters per year over 30 years. According to Russian reports, this will make China the second largest importer of Russian natural gas. The excerpted article also notes that the project is part of a plan to increase bilateral trade to \$200 billion by the middle of the next decade. In June, the two countries upgraded relations to “comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era,” and have deepened cooperation in military and economic affairs.

However, for China, the agreement is not just about good economic relations with its northern neighbor. Particularly since the CCP’s 19th party congress in 2017, the government has placed emphasis on low-carbon, clean energy production. In recent years China mandated a switch from coal power to natural gas in an attempt to tackle the country’s polluted skies, coal-related health problems and reduce CO2 emissions (natural gas produces half the CO2 emissions of coal). However, the program backfired, with much of the north of the country facing heating shortfalls in wintertime. Notably in 2017 many schools and businesses in rural areas issued complaints about insufficient access to gas-heating. Investments in Russia’s Yamal Peninsula, such as the Sabetta Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal and the Power of Siberia Agreement, should help offset demand. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



A map of the Power of Siberia pipeline, its connection into China, and its future connections with another pipeline.

Source: Khu&#039;hamgaba Kitap via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Power\\_of\\_Siberia\\_Map.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Power_of_Siberia_Map.png), CC BY-SA 4.0

**“The Power of Siberia pipeline starts in eastern Siberia, Russia, from Blagoveshchensk enters China via Heihe in Heilongjiang Province. The total length of the pipeline in Russia is about 3,000 kilometers. 3,371 kilometers of new pipelines were built in Chinese territory, with 1,740 kilometers worth already in use.”**

**Source:** “习近平同俄罗斯总统视频连线 共同见证中俄东线天然气管道投产通气仪式 (Xi Jinping and Russian President Witness Launch of the Power of Siberia Gas Pipeline via Video Link),” CCTV, 2 December 2019. [tv.cctv.com/2019/12/02/VIDEKljNmqqLVbGsBOba8FI0191202.shtml](http://tv.cctv.com/2019/12/02/VIDEKljNmqqLVbGsBOba8FI0191202.shtml)

Chinese President Xi Jinping joined Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing on Tuesday afternoon to witness the opening ceremony of the Power of Siberia natural gas pipeline. Vice-Premier Han Zheng attended the ceremony.

Xi greeted Putin in Sochi via video link.

Xi emphasized that this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Russia and that he and President Putin jointly announced the development of a new era of comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation between China and Russia, and unanimously decided to continue to make the development of China-Russia relations a priority for their respective diplomacy, and unswervingly deepen bilateral strategic cooperation and cooperation in various fields. Currently, China and Russia are in a critical period of national development, and Sino-Russian relations have entered a new era. It is hoped that the two sides will make further efforts to build more landmark projects such as the Power of Siberia natural gas pipeline, and contribute to the development of the two countries and better benefit the two countries and their peoples.

Putin said that as Russia and China celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties, the Power of Siberia gas pipeline is of great historical significance and will bring the strategic cooperation between the two countries to a new height. “In 2014, President Xi Jinping and I witnessed the signing of the cooperation document on the project, the two teams have worked hard in extreme weather to complete the construction on schedule, and Russia will supply 1 trillion cubic meters of natural gas to China over the next 30 years. This will help to implement the consensus reached between me and President Xi Jinping to increase bilateral trade between Russia and China to \$200 billion by 2024.”

Russia expressed that it is ready to work with China to ensure the smooth implementation of this landmark strategic cooperation project. Chinese and Russian representatives at three pipeline stations along the Heihe, Atamanskaya (location of a gas compression station outside Blagoveshchensk) and Chayandin pipelines, reported to the two heads of state that Russia is ready to supply gas to China and China is ready to receive gas. Xi and Putin then gave the go-ahead to the teams.

The Power of Siberia pipeline starts in eastern Siberia, Russia, from Blagoveshchensk enters China via Heihe in Heilongjiang Province. The total length of the pipeline in Russia is about 3,000 kilometers. 3,371 kilometers of new pipelines were built in Chinese territory, with 1,740 kilometers worth already in use.



## Construction of Siberian Gas Pipeline to China Begins

**OE Watch Commentary:** In 2018, Russia exported almost 225 billion cubic meters of gas, of which pipelines to Europe supplied close to 200 billion. China is a good customer for Russian LNG and is now going to be buying Russian natural gas. As the accompanying passage from *Izvestia* discusses, “the Power of Siberia pipeline will carry gas to China from two fields: Kovyktinskiy in the Irkutsk Oblast and Chayandinskiy in Yakutia.” The addition of another major customer should be good for the Russian economy. Realistically, it is too far from Siberia to Europe to export gas from that region. If it weren’t for Chinese customers, the gas could stay in the ground. **End OE Watch Commentary (Grau)**

***“Constructing the Siberian gas pipeline will allow Russia to provide for 10 to 15 percent of the Chinese gas market.... The new export route will lessen Russia’s dependency on supplying natural gas to Europe, but it will not become a full-fledged alternative to the European sales. Nevertheless, Russia has an opportunity to make extra profit in the eastern market that is more profitable now than the European market.”***

**Source:** Mikhail Kalmatskiy: “Pipe Is Transporting: What Will Launch of Power of Siberia Gas Pipeline Offer Russia: New Direction Can Turn out More Profitable than European Direction,” *Izvestia*, 2 December 2019. <https://iz.ru/>

### ***Siberian pipeline to China means more profit and less dependence on European sales***

*The Power of Siberia pipeline will carry gas to China from two fields: Kovyktinskiy in the Irkutsk Oblast and Chayandinskiy in Yakutia. The capacity of the gas pipeline is 38 billion cubic meters of gas a year. There is a possibility to pump more gas. According to Gazprom CEO Aleksey Miller, the annual supplementary gas supplies to China can be 5 to 10 billion cubic meters.*

*The pipeline will reach its estimated capacity in 2025. Gazprom representatives reported that the contractual commitment to supply China with gas along the Power of Siberia will be 5 billion cubic meters in 2020, 10 billion cubic meters in 2021, and 15 billion cubic meters in 2022, and the minimum sampling is 85 percent of these volumes.*

*In May 2014, Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation] signed a 30-year contract for 38 billion cubic meters of gas supplies per year. Its total amount was around \$400 billion... Aleksey Maslov, head of the School of Oriental Studies at the National Research University Higher School of Economics assumes that Russian gas may represent 10 to 15 percent of the Chinese market. “Theoretically, Russia could cover up to 20 percent of China’s gas requirements, but Beijing would unlikely let that happen. First, it does not allow anyone to have over 12 percent of the share of one type of product in its market. Besides, now China is holding talks with Turkmenistan on increasing gas supplies. It is cheaper there, and the Chinese built the gas pipeline so it belongs to them. So Turkmenistan is our primary competitor in this market...”*

*According to this expert,... the Russian blue fuel comes to China at the right time, since it perfectly fits into China’s program to transition industries gradually to gas and petroleum instead of coal. Coal now makes up almost 80 percent in the energy balance of the country.*

*Aleksey Kalachev, Finam expert and analyst, believes that Russian gas can account for 10 percent of the Chinese market. Expecting more is difficult as China is robustly diversifying the blue fuel sources. It buys LNG [liquefied natural gas] from around the world, it buys the Turkmen gas, and it produces approximately half of the required amount itself.*

*In 2018, China’s demand for natural gas amounted to 280 billion cubic meters. According to the forecasts of Chinese Government agencies, demand for the blue fuel will rise to 310 billion cubic meters of gas in 2019....*

*...Constructing the Siberian gas pipeline will allow Russia to provide for 10 to 15 percent of the Chinese gas market.... The new export route will lessen Russia’s dependency on supplying natural gas to Europe, but it will not become a full-fledged alternative to the European sales. Nevertheless, Russia has an opportunity to make extra profit in the eastern market that is more profitable now than the European market.*





## China Issues New Plan to Address Aging Population

**OE Watch Commentary:** China's government is issuing a new plan to address population aging. While many countries' population growth have begun to slow down, China's aging is on track to be particularly dramatic. In 2016, over 230 million Chinese were over 60, and that number is expected to rise to 487 million (35% of the population) by 2055. As explained in the translated readout of the new Plan, the Chinese Communist Party and State Council view population aging as having a direct impact on every aspect of the Chinese economy and China's "comprehensive national power." The plan sets deadlines for developing a framework for dealing with population aging by 2022, instituting the policies by 2035, and having complete and mature policies in place by 2050.

Despite strong economic growth since the 1980s, China's government and economy will likely have trouble when faced with slowing growth and rising healthcare and pension costs. China's total debt ratio to GDP hit a record high in the summer of 2019, topping 300 percent for the first time, a consequence of lending that helped fuel its economic growth.

China loosened the One-Child Policy in January 2016, but the new two-child policy and financial incentives appear to have limited success. High costs of living, and pressure from educational and work cultures and other factors have disincentivized new parents from having multiple children, so the Chinese government will have to take steps to avoid further problems.

The Plan, therefore, lays out five areas of action: First, social security funds for retirees are to be consolidated and expanded. Second, promote more effective pre-natal screening and education to create a high-quality population. Third, create a high-quality system of services and products for the elderly, with an emphasis on better health care, including preventative care. Fourth, refocus scientific and technological development to address population-aging related issues. The fifth section notes that additional work is needed to ensure legal frameworks to protect the elderly, which have increasingly been the target of various scams and other crimes in China. As emphasized in the fourth directive, Chinese leaders understand that population aging will have a significant impact on the economy. While the service industry now makes up over 50 percent of the economy, many sectors will likely see shortfalls in workers, requiring prompt investment in automation and other smart technologies to increase productivity while reducing reliance on workers. Educating the workforce, and reforms to the mandatory retirement age could allow workers to defer retirement.

Interestingly, the article ends with a note that China plans to use international cooperative agreements, particularly the Belt and Road Initiative to help address population aging. While this includes cooperation in scientific studies and sharing lessons on effective policies, it is possible that China may seek to encourage migration to help reduce the domestic burden of the elderly—something that appears to be happening informally already. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



*People walking on road near buildings during night.*

Source: @yogurtyogurt via Unsplash, <https://images.unsplash.com/photo-1526237377175-22e94a1ed9c4>, Public Domain

***“Population aging has far-reaching impacts on the entire economy, society, culture and even comprehensive national strength and international competitiveness.”***



## Continued: China Issues New Plan to Address Aging Population

**Source:** “中共中央 国务院印发《国家积极应对人口老龄化中长期规划》(CCP Central Committee and State Council issue Medium- and Long-Term Plan for Proactive Response to Population Aging), *Xinhua*, 21 November 2019. [www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-11/21/content\\_5454347.htm](http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-11/21/content_5454347.htm)

*To proactively address population aging, and in accordance with the Party's 19th Congress Work Report, recently the CCP Central Committee and State Council issued the Medium- and Long-Term Plan for Proactive Response to Population Aging (hereafter, “Plan”). The Plan is a strategic, comprehensive and guiding document for China to actively respond to population aging by the middle of this century, with a long-term outlook to 2050, from the near to mid-term components covering 2022-2035.*

*The Plan points out that population aging is an important trend of social development, the embodiment of the progress of human civilization, and the basic national conditions of our country for a longer period of time. Population aging has far-reaching impacts on the entire economy, society, culture and even comprehensive national strength and international competitiveness.*

*The Plan emphasizes that actively responding to population aging is a basic requirement for implementing the ‘people-centric development concept,’ a necessary guarantee for the realization of high-quality economic development, and an important measure to safeguard national security and social harmony and stability. In accordance with the requirements of high-quality economic development, we should adhere to the main line of supply-side structural reform, build a long-term institutional framework, formulate major policies that are effective, adhere to the basic principles of active response, joint construction, and sharing, moderate capacity, innovation and openness, and develop a response to population aging with Chinese characteristics.*

*The Plan defines the strategic objectives of actively responding to population aging, namely, the continuous consolidation of the institutional basis for actively responding to the population aging, the increasing abundance of wealth reserves, the continuous improvement of human capital, more powerful support of science and technology, the rich quality of products and services, the livable and friendly social environment, and the continuous adaptation of economic and social development to the process of population aging. We will successfully build a socialist modern power and realize the Chinese Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. By 2022, China's institutional framework for actively dealing with population will be initially established, by 2035, the institutional arrangements for actively dealing with population aging will be more scientific and effective, and by the middle of this century, the institutional arrangements for dealing with population aging, which are compatible with a strong modern socialist nation, will be mature and complete.*

*The Plan deploys specific tasks to address population aging in five areas.*

*First, consolidate social security reserves that deal with population aging. By expanding the total amount, optimizing the structure and improving the efficiency, the economic development is adapted to population aging. By perfecting the national income distribution system, optimizing the distribution pattern between government, enterprises and residents, we will steadily increase the reserve of retirement benefits. A more equitable and sustainable social security system will continue to promote the well-being of all people.*

*Second, improve the effective supply of labor under the background of population aging. Improve the overall quality of China's human resources by improving the quality of the new population, improving the quality of the new labor force, and building a lifelong learning system for learning. We will promote the utilization of human resources development, achieve higher quality and full employment, and ensure that the total amount and quality of human resources actively cope with population aging are sufficient and high quality.*

*Third, create high-quality services and product-supply systems for the elderly. We will actively promote the construction of a healthy China and establish and improve a comprehensive and continuous system of health care for the elderly, including health education, preventive health care, disease diagnosis and treatment, rehabilitation care, long-term care and peaceful care. We will improve the multi-level old-age service system based on homeownership, community-based, full institutional development, an natural combination of medical care, expand the supply of elderly-appropriate products and services in various channels and fields, and improve the quality of products and services.*

*Fourth, strengthen the capacity of scientific and technological innovation to cope with population aging. Deepen implementation of innovation-driven development strategies, with technological innovation as the first driving force and strategic support to actively respond to population aging, and comprehensively improve the smart technology-level of the national economic industrial system. Improve the level of science and technology and informationization of services for the elderly, increase the support of health science and technology for the elderly, and strengthen the research and development and application of assisted technologies for the elderly.*

*Fifth, build a social environment emphasizing elder-care, filial piety, and respect for the elderly. Strengthen the rule of law to deal with population aging and safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of the elderly. Build a family support system, build a friendly society for the elderly, and create a good atmosphere for the elderly, family, society and the government to participate together.*

*The Plan calls for adhering to the Party's leadership in actively responding to population aging, adhering to the overall responsibility of the principals of the Party and government, strengthening all levels of government's ability to implement the plan, and further improving the organizational coordination mechanisms. We will promote international cooperation and policy dialogue and project interface with the Belt and Road countries to address population aging...*





## China Seeks New Methods to Control Information Space

**OE Watch Commentary:** According to Chinese state news agency *Xinhua*, the United Front Work Department and Cyberspace Administration of China recently held a meeting with prominent Netizens to improve cyber governance. China's close monitoring of the internet is well known, but the meeting points to a rising coordination between administrative bodies, propaganda and China's official organs of influence such as the United Front.

While the United Front Work Department (UFWD) has become more famous for its role in external Chinese Communist Party (CCP) influence abroad, its primary remit is domestic. The United Front refers to coordination of different social and political forces to achieve common goals. This is reflected in the United Front Work Department's bureaus (see graphic), which are focused on influencing specific demographics: political (including the eight official political parties in China other than the CCP that, according to China's constitution are led by the CCP), religious, ethnic, and social classes. Part of this group is specific outreach to intellectuals at home and abroad to gain support for the CCP's policies.

The UFWD's chief, You Quan [尤权], gave remarks at the meeting. You has extensive experience in cross-strait issues due to his previous roles as Party Secretary of Fujian Province (situated opposite the strait from Taiwan).

You's remarks at the meeting reference the "Four Consciousnesses" [四个意识], part of Xi Jinping's political ideology that means enhancing political consciousness (loyalty to the Party), overall situation consciousness (awareness of and implementation of the Party's orders), core consciousness (acknowledgement of Xi Jinping's role as "core" of the Party) and alignment consciousness (personal consistency with Xi Jinping thought and the Party). Also mentioned were the "four self-confidences," [四个自信] another part of "Xi Jinping thought" related to promotion of a Chinese view of governance, usually described as "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

The other major organization present at the meeting was the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC), which plays a key role in regulating online content, shutting down vulgar or politically sensitive content. The Cyberspace Administration head who made a report at the meeting, Zhuang Rongwen [庄荣文], notably has an additional role as deputy in the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (中宣部; also known as the Propaganda Department). Zhuang, who was appointed to his cyberspace role in 2018, also serves a secretary of the CCP's Central Committee Secretariat, an important position in the CCP's bureaucracy.

While his remarks are not reported, an article published on 25 November in "People's Forum" 《人民论坛》 featured Zhuang's comments that while the Internet is the "new infrastructure of the information age" and "'artery' of economic and social development", it is a "double-edged sword" and that "cyber ideological security is directly related to national political security." Zhuang called for the establishment of a more effective internet management system.

Buried under the ideological rhetoric in You's remarks at the meeting and Zhuang's article is an acknowledgement that the Chinese government needs to more proactively control the information space, both in direct management and through engagement with Netizens, presumably "influencers" in particular. This can already be seen in the notable uptick in the number of Chinese foreign ministry and other officials engaging with western intellectuals and the general public on Twitter and other platforms in recent months. Other indicators of the more proactive approach of the Chinese government in the information domain include revisions to the professional code of ethics for journalists that includes language emphasizing that journalists "need to safeguard the country's political and cultural security as well as social stability."

As the Chinese government attempts to adapt to developments in internet news media and social activity, this engagement with prominent Netizens and tighter control of journalists' activities will become an important new method of control. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**



You Quan in 2014.

Source: UNIDO via Wikimedia, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a6/You\\_Quan\\_in\\_2014.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a6/You_Quan_in_2014.jpg), CC BY 2.0

***“It is necessary to strengthen the building of network representatives, support them to play an active role in guiding public opinion, strive to unite them around the party, and consolidate wisdom and strength for the realization of the Chinese nation's great revival of the Chinese dream.”***



# Continued: China Seeks New Methods to Control Information Space

**Source:** “中央统战部、中央网信办在京召开网络人士统战工作会 尤权出席并讲话 (The Central United Front Department, Cyberspace Administration of China in Beijing Held a United Front Work Meeting with Netizens, Yu Quan Attended and Gave Remarks),” *Xinhua*, 28 November 2019. [www.cac.gov.cn/2019-11/28/c\\_1576475103703888.htm](http://www.cac.gov.cn/2019-11/28/c_1576475103703888.htm)

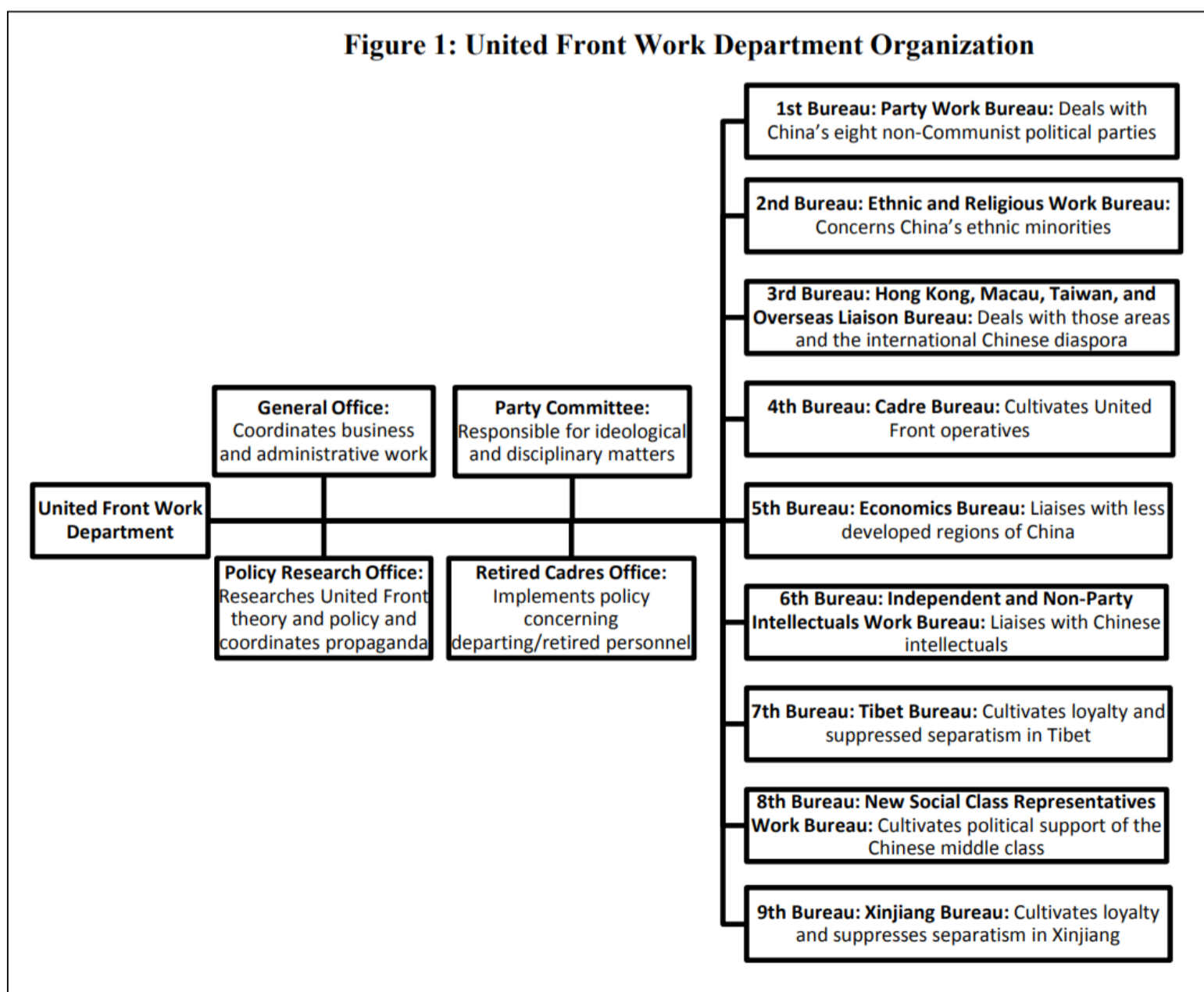
*The Central United Front Department and the Cyberspace Administration of China held a United Front work conference with Netizens on the 28th of November. Secretary of the Secretariat of the CCP Central Committee Secretariat, Deputy Minister of the Central Publicity Department, and Director of the Cyberspace Administration of China Zhuang Rongwen made a report.*

*You Quan pointed out that the CCP Central Committee, with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core, attaches great importance to the work of Netizens as part of the United Front and fully affirms the important role of Netizens. We should take General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important ideas on strengthening and improving the work of the United Front as our guide and use good Netizens to guide them to support the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the socialist system, and effectively strengthen the “four consciousness” and the “four self-confidences” and achieve the “two maintains”.*

*It is necessary to strengthen the building of network representatives, support them to play an active role in guiding public opinion, strive to unite them around the party, and consolidate wisdom and strength for the realization of the Chinese nation’s great revival of the Chinese dream.*

*Attendees included Party Committee and United Front Department members from Provincial, Municipal and sub-provincial cities, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps as well as officials from relevant departments of the Cyberspace Administration of China and Central and State organizations.*

**Figure 1: United Front Work Department Organization**



Alexander Bowe, “United Front Work Department Organization,”  
 Source: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, August 24, 2018, [https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%20Overseas%20United%20Front%20Work%20-%20Background%20and%20Implications%20for%20US_final_0.pdf), Public Domain





## Pakistan: Looking at General Bajwa's Extension as Chief of Army Staff

**OE Watch Commentary:** In August 2019, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan extended the tenure of General Qamar Javed Bajwa as Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff for a period of three years, but as the accompanying excerpted article from *Dawn* reports, in late November the Supreme Court of Pakistan suspended that decision. As the article discusses, the Supreme Court later announced that General Bajwa "will retain the top military position for another six months" and that the court reached this decision "after being assured by the government that parliament will pass legislation on the extension/reappointment of an army chief within six months." While this resolved General Bajwa's status for the time being, the article examines several important developments that have taken place during General Bajwa's time as Chief of Army Staff.



*Chinese cargo trucks awaiting Pakistan Customs clearance at Sost.*

Source: Anthony Maw, Vancouver, Canada via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sost\\_Pakistan\\_Customs\\_and\\_Chinese\\_Trucks\\_IMG\\_7494\\_China\\_Pakistan\\_Karakoram\\_Highway\\_KKH.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sost_Pakistan_Customs_and_Chinese_Trucks_IMG_7494_China_Pakistan_Karakoram_Highway_KKH.jpg), CC BY SA 3.0

The article looks at how General Bajwa has been at the head of the army since the launch of Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad in February 2017, which is "aimed at indiscriminately eliminating the "residual/latent threat of terrorism," consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and further ensuring Pakistan's border security." The article mentions that the operation "was progressing satisfactorily" as of May 2019 and points to fences on the Afghan-Pakistan border as "one of the major successes" of it. The article also brings up the clashes between India and Pakistan earlier this year after the Pulwama incident and how "relations worsened between India and Pakistan after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stripped Kashmiris of the special autonomy they had for seven decades through a rushed presidential order on August 5."

Lastly, the article looks at the role General Bajwa has played in Chinese-Pakistan relations, pointing out the Chinese Foreign Ministry's comment that Bajwa "was a sincere and old friend of the Chinese government and the army." This statement of support for General Bajwa comes at a time when there has been a "surge in terrorist activity in Balochistan" that Pakistani officials believe are "linked to the launch of the second phase of CPEC [the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor]." Chinese investments for the second phase of CPEC will reportedly involve industrial and agricultural sectors of Pakistan's economy and infrastructure. Back in August, Prime Minister Khan stated that the security situation in the country required General Bajwa to remain as Chief of Army Staff for another term. While it remains to be seen if General Bajwa gets another three year term or is replaced, each one of the security issues outlined in the article will continue to be significant factors in Pakistan's security over the next several years. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

***“The Supreme Court announced on November 28 that General Bajwa will retain the top military position for another six months...”***



## Continued: Pakistan: Looking at General Bajwa's Extension as Chief of Army Staff

**Source:** Sana Ali, “‘The Bajwa doctrine’: Highlights from Gen Bajwa’s 2016-19 tenure as COAS,” *Dawn*, 29 November 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1519158>

*Three years ago General Qamar Javed Bajwa took charge as the country’s chief of army staff. With his retirement due in November 2019, Prime Minister Imran Khan approved an extension in his tenure citing “regional security situation” back in August this year.*

*The matter of his extension, however, took an unanticipated turn on November 26 when the Supreme Court suspended the notification by the government and grilled the attorney general on how the whole matter was handled.*

*Following two days of lengthy court proceedings and back-to-back cabinet meetings — all in an attempt by the government to satisfy the top court on the legal grounds of the move — the Supreme Court announced on November 28 that Gen Bajwa will retain the top military position for another six months. The three-member bench announced the much-anticipated verdict after being assured by the government that parliament will pass legislation on the extension/reappointment of an army chief within six months...*

*...Dawn.com takes a look at some of the key highlights from Gen Bajwa’s three-year tenure as the Chief of Army Staff...*

*During the course of Gen Bajwa’s tenure, the term and the idea of a ‘Bajwa doctrine’ came under much discussion...The ‘doctrine’ came under discussion and was criticised by some sections of the civil society and the media...*

*During Gen Bajwa’s term, the Pakistan Army, in February 2017, launched ‘Operation Radd-ul-Fasaad’ (RuF). The operation was announced in the aftermath of a fresh resurgence of terror attacks in the country.*

*At the time the operation was launched, ISPR said Radd-ul-Fasaad — which translates roughly to ‘elimination of discord’ — was aimed at indiscriminately eliminating the “residual/latent threat of terrorism”, consolidating the gains made in other military operations, and further ensuring Pakistan’s border security.*

*In May 2019, Maj Gen Ghafoor said the operation was progressing satisfactorily. Sharing statistics, he said 47 major operations and 100,000 intelligence-based operations had been undertaken, which had resulted in the recovery of over 64,000 weapons and 5.1 million units of ammunition.*

*...One of the major successes under the RuF has been border fencing.*

*In June 2017, fencing along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border commenced in an effort to improve the security situation along the international boundary. Last year, the army announced that work on fencing was going apace and the project would be completed by December 2019. A total of 1,000 kilometres of the border has so far been fenced decreasing chances of unauthorised border crossing...*

*Meanwhile, tensions between Pakistan and India flared in February after a suicide car bombing killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary police in occupied Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan for the attack and attacked Pakistan...The crisis between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India had raised fears of an all-out war after the Pakistan Air Force on February 27 shot down two Indian aircraft for violating Pakistani airspace...*

*Relations worsened between India and Pakistan after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) stripped Kashmiris of the special autonomy they had for seven decades through a rushed presidential order on August 5.*

*Later that month, Gen Bajwa said the Pakistan Army was fully prepared to thwart any Indian misadventure and aggression...*

*Alternatively, Pakistan’s relations with China have deepened over the years with projects such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).*

*Commenting on the extension of Gen Bajwa as chief of army staff, China’s foreign ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said: “We believe [that] under the leadership of Gen Bajwa, Pakistan Army will continue to make contributions to upholding Pakistan’s sovereignty and security interests and regional peace and stability.”...The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said Gen Bajwa was a sincere and old friend of the Chinese government and the army and he had made positive contributions to relations between China and Pakistan.*

*...China and Pakistan have been pursuing the multi-billion dollar project since 2015 that involves connectivity and infrastructure projects.*

*In June, amidst a surge in terrorist activity in Balochistan, the army reaffirmed its commitment to ensure security of CPEC.*

*Security officials believed the sudden intensification of attacks was linked to the launch of the second phase of CPEC, the progress on border fencing and the fluid situation in Afghanistan. The attack on a hotel in Gwadar accentuated concerns about CPEC security...*





## Indonesian Couple Involved in Terrorism

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 14 November, the Indonesian-language *Tribun News* reported on a suicide bomber who attempted to detonate a bomb at Medan’s police headquarters one day earlier. According to the excerpted article, initial investigations suggested the suicide bomber was a newcomer to terrorism, as opposed to a terrorist suspect who was long known to authorities. He is believed to have become radicalized on social media and his attack fit the pattern of several Indonesian Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) supporters, who followed the example of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Another notable finding was that the suicide bomber’s wife was radicalized before him. When she was detained, she admitted she had been communicating with other female terrorists in prison. Therefore, the investigators suspect his wife influenced the suicide bomber. The article also indicates that the wife was planning a suicide attack in Bali, an island popular with tourists. This would hardly be the first time women were involved in terrorism in Indonesia. In May 2018, Indonesia witnessed a woman detonate a suicide bomb in Surabaya on a motorcycle alongside her children and husband. She was also an ISIS sympathizer.

In terms of ideology, Indonesian authorities believe the suicide bomber in Medan chose his target because, like other previous Indonesian terrorists, he believed the police were *taghut*, an Arabic term referring to “tyrant rulers.” According to the authorities, family members usually are able to sense another family member changing his or her personality or behavior before they carry out a terrorist attack. Therefore, the first line of defense against terrorism must come from the family. However, in this case, with the suicide bomber’s wife involved in terrorism, this was not the case. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



Medan location.

Source: CIA Factbook via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Medan\\_location.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Medan_location.png), Public Domain

***“In fact, the perpetrator’s wife was exposed to radicalism first.”***

**Source:** “Fakta Istri Bomber Bom Polrestabes Medan, Sempat Menemui Narapidana Terorisme di Medan (Facts of the Wife of the Medan Polrestabes Bomber, Met Terrorist Prisoners in Medan),” *Tribun News*, 14 November 2019. <https://www.tribunnews.com/regional/2019/11/14/fakta-istri-bomber-bom-polrestabes-medan-sempat-menemui-narapidana-terorisme-di-medan>

*Polri Brigadier General Dedi Prasetyo confirmed that Detachment 88 had secured DA, the wife of a suicide bomber in Medan. General Dedi Prasetyo said that in fact the perpetrator’s wife was exposed to radicalism first. Based on the findings of the examination the wife of the perpetrator, she admitted to communicating rather actively with several networks. The wife of the perpetrator even met physically with a convicted terrorist, who is currently undergoing punishment in the Class 2 Medan women’s prison. Based on the results of the examination, the wife planned to carry out attacks or acts of terrorism in Bali.*

*State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Spokesman, Wawan Purwanto, spoke related to the suicide bombing that occurred at Medan Polrestabes. According to Wawan, the suicide bomber attacking Medan Police Station was a newcomer to the world of terror. Wawan explained if viewed with other patterns, the suicide bomber in Medan Polrestabes used the pattern of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD). “Later, the pattern employed by JAD was also the pattern connected to ISIS,” explained Wawan Purwanto. According to Wawan, the pattern also related to exposure to radicalism on social media.*

*Wawan Purwanto said that the average person exposed to radicalism regards the security forces as a thagut because the security forces are a specialized unit whose task is to stem the tide of terrorism. The perpetrators are known to be people who are well known to neighbors and are active in worship and religious activities. Regarding this matter, Wawan Purwanto asserted that a change in attitude of people exposed to radicalism could change drastically after exposure [to radicalism]. So, closeness with people such as family and neighbors is crucial for the initial diagnosis of the change in behavior.*



## Egypt-Russia Ties Blossom

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian-Egyptian ties continue to blossom in three key areas: head-of-state relations, military cooperation and shared media narratives. Last October, the two heads of state co-hosted the Russian-African Summit and Economic Forum in Sochi, where Russia offered to mediate the Egypt-Ethiopia Nile dispute. Planning is currently underway for President Vladimir Putin of Russia to visit Egypt next year, and the countries have agreed to hold two summits a year, one in Cairo and one in Moscow. In mid-November, a Russian military delegation led by the minister of defense visited Cairo for the “Sixth Joint Commission on Defense Cooperation.” The meeting took place days after the conclusion of a joint air defense exercise, also hosted by Egypt, called “Arrow of Friendship-1.”



Egypt-Russia Sixth Joint Commission on Defense Cooperation (November 2019).

Source: Russian Defense Ministry, <http://ar.mil.ru/images/upload/2019/SAVX7866-1200.JPG>, CC by 4.0

Egyptian expenditures on Russian armaments are on the rise, including a purported deal to acquire Russian Su-35 fighter jets that could become effective in 2020. Egyptian media has batted down criticism of the deal, reminding its domestic audience that Egypt is a sovereign nation that deliberately chooses to diversify its weapons sources for strategic reasons. The diversification mandate is a popular one, according to a retired military officer now serving in Egypt’s parliament, who during a call-in to a popular TV talk show explained that “all the Egyptian people stand behind their political leaders in diversifying weapons sources.” Egypt’s current diversification strategy converges with Russian interests and is supported by that country’s Arabic-language media outlets, which are increasingly influential in Egypt: *RT* and *Sputnik* have both inked deals for the website of Egypt’s *al-Ahram* to carry their content, and *RT Arabic* is one of Egypt’s most-watched news channels.

The Egyptian government has many challenges in years to come. Domestically, a youth bulge is entering the labor market and rising sea levels will eventually flood parts of the Nile Delta. Internationally, the scramble for Mediterranean gas deposits and negotiations on Nile River waters have turned Turkey and Ethiopia into Egypt’s bogeymen du jour. If Russia can continue presenting itself as a country that shares and understands the Egyptian perspective on these and other sensitive national security topics, we should expect Egypt-Russia ties to blossom even further. (Also see “Egypt and Russia Deepening Military Cooperation,” *OE Watch*, October 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

**“All the Egyptian people stand behind their political leaders in diversifying weapons sources...”**

**Source:** “Putin may visit Egypt in 2020, envoy says,” *TASS*, 18 November 2019. <https://tass.com/politics/1089869>

*Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Egypt is scheduled for 2020, Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov told TASS on Monday, adding that preparations for the visit were underway. “We are in contact with our Egyptian friends in regard to preparations for our president’s visit because [Moscow and Cairo] actually agreed to hold summits every year, in fact, twice a year, in Russia and Egypt. I think a meeting will take place in Egypt next year. The visit will mark important developments in our strategic partnership with Egypt,” Bogdanov pointed out.*

**Source:** “Fiery Response from Parliamentarian to American Declarations on Weapons Deals,” *el-Fagr*, 26 November 2019. <https://www.elfagr.com/3791024> رد ناري من البرلمان على التصريحات الأمريكية بشأن صفقات الأسلحة

*Major General Yahya El-Kadwani, a member of the Defense Committee in the House of Representatives, said that Egypt has followed a path of diversified weapons sources for tens of years, and has German submarines and French Raffales. El-Kadwani added during the program “The Story” broadcast on MBC Egypt, on Monday evening, that Egypt is a sovereign country with its own interests, as well as a strategic ally of the United States of America... He added that all the Egyptian people stand behind their political leaders in diversifying weapons sources.*





## Saudi Arabia and the UAE Streamline Military Industry

**OE Watch Commentary:** In the next decade, Saudi Arabia and the UAE aspire to develop domestic military industries that will boost local economy and improve national security. The economic logic is especially compelling given their large defense budgets. Both countries see the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” as an opportunity to become globally competitive production centers of high-tech goods and services, including military platforms and equipment. To this end, they are streamlining their defense industries to favor localization and new technology.

At the Dubai airshow last November, the UAE showcased its new defense conglomerate “EDGE,” which brings the major components of its defense industry under one roof. Its CEO, the founder and former head of the Emirati cybersecurity firm DarkMatter, uses Silicon Valley-speak to explain how EDGE will bring “agile, bold and disruptive solutions” to increase speed, efficiency and innovation in the defense industry. EDGE’s futuristic focus includes “autonomous vehicles, cyber-physical systems, advanced propulsion systems and robotics, with a focus on artificial intelligence across our products and services.”



Saudi Arabian Military Industries company logo.

Source: Qrmoo3 via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saudi\\_Arabian\\_Military\\_Industries\\_company.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saudi_Arabian_Military_Industries_company.svg), CC 4.0

Saudi Arabia restructured its defense industry in 2017, in part to focus on localizing half of its military spending by 2030. Last September, Saudi Arabia’s military industrial regulator, the General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI), introduced a new licensing program for companies operating in the Saudi defense industry. One of the first licenses was granted in November to the tech-centric Advanced Electronics Company (AEC), which was fully acquired by the Saudi Arabian Military Industries company (SAMI) in 2019. GAMI also announced in November that Saudi Arabia intends to increase “support for scientific research from its military budget to 4 percent during the next 10 years, in order to convey technology, weapons industry and military industries in general.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

***“He credits the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Programme and the nuclear power plant at Barakah for enticing a new crop of UAE students to study space and nuclear physics, among other now in-demand jobs domestically, and sees Edge as playing a similar role...”***

**Source:** “Abu Dhabi defence group Edge looks to smart technology to tackle low-tech militants,” *The National*, 18 November 2019. <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/abu-dhabi-defence-group-edge-looks-to-smart-technology-to-tackle-low-tech-militants-1.939217>

*He said Edge is “investing heavily” in autonomous capabilities “whether for drones, cars, ships, or drones for package delivery. Autonomous is autonomous.” Mr Al Bannai named quantum computing as one of the biggest emerging opportunities and “an area we will be aggressively investing in.” He cautioned, however, that quantum computing is still a very new - and relatively unproven - field. The company is also making investments in technology for electronic warfare including hardware-software like sensors, cameras and radar... He credits the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Programme and the nuclear power plant at Barakah for enticing a new crop of UAE students to study space and nuclear physics, among other now in-demand jobs domestically, and sees Edge as playing a similar role.*

**Source:** “UAE’s EDGE Conglomerate to be Largest Exhibitor at Dubai Airshow,” *Al-Defaiya*, 7 November 2019. <https://www.defaiya.com/news/Regional%20News/UAE/2019/11/07/uae-s-edge-conglomerate-to-be-largest-exhibitor-at-dubai-airshow>

*“Technology is drastically changing the aerospace industry, and EDGE is taking significant strides to respond with agile, bold and disruptive solutions - bringing products to market faster and more efficiently,” said His Excellency Faisal Al Bannai, CEO and Managing Director, EDGE. “With Air Force and Air Defence being key areas of focus for militaries, we are invested in reimagining aviation capabilities and supporting its unprecedented growth and development, through technology exploration in areas such as autonomous vehicles, cyber-physical systems, advanced propulsion systems and robotics, with a focus on artificial intelligence across our products and services. The Dubai Airshow gives us an opportunity to deepen our strategic relationships within the aerospace industry,” he added.*

**Source:** “Localization of Saudi military industry to support economic diversification,” *Arab News*, 11 November 2019. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1582606/saudi-arabia>

*General Authority for Military Industries (GAMI), confirmed that the Kingdom will increase support for scientific research from its military budget to 4 percent during the next 10 years, in order to convey technology, weapons industry and military industries in general. He stressed that the Kingdom currently spends the equivalent of 0.2 percent, but in the coming years it will seek to raise this rate.*



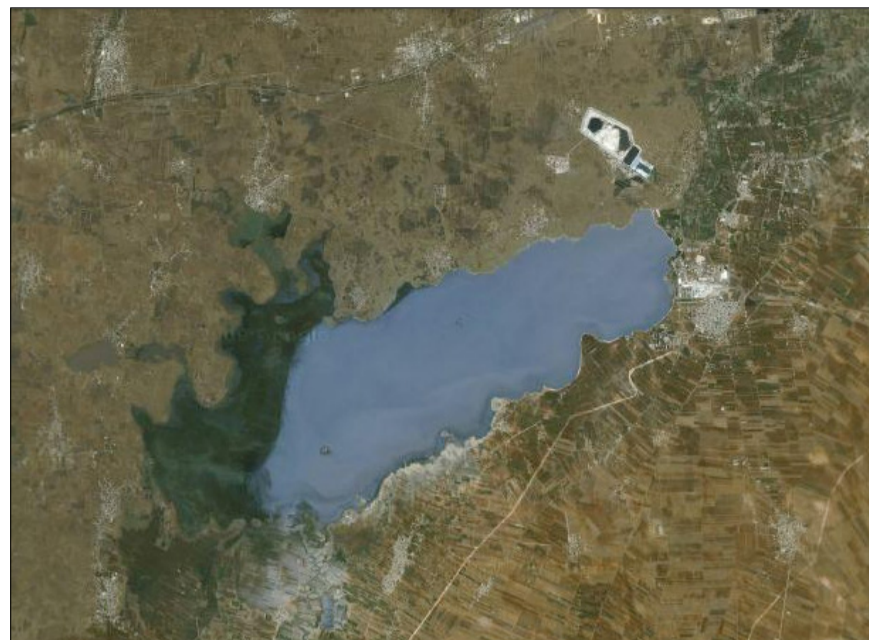
## Competition over Scarce Energy in Syria

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russian industrial engineering firm Stroytransgaz/STG Engineering is among the largest foreign companies operating in Syria (see “Stroytransgaz: ‘A Complement to Russian Security and Military Influence’,” *OE Watch*, June 2019). The company’s contracts include the expansion and management of the Tartous Port container terminal, mining rights to Syria’s richest phosphate mines, and license to operate a fertilizer plant on the outskirts of Homs. It has also obtained the rights to explore for oil and gas in parts of Iraq’s Anbar Province and offshore in Syria’s Mediterranean waters.

Not all is rosy for Stroytransgaz, though. The Homs fertilizer plant spews toxic fumes that are causing respiratory illnesses in the nearby town of Qattinah. Its residents staged a protest sit-in and temporarily shut down the factory in September, before a promissory visit by the Syrian minister of industry convinced them to step down. A similar protest in November was defused by another visit, this time by the governor of Homs Province. As the accompanying article notes, “as usual the promises evaporated in the air.” In early December, a Syrian parliamentarian representing Hama, where electricity is rare these days, blamed power cuts on fuel diversions to the Homs fertilizer plant. In Tartous, where STG Engineering took official control of the port in September, the Syrian pro-government daily *al-Watan* was critical of the company’s efforts to cut workers and restructure contracts.

The open criticism of Stroytransgaz may signal competition over scarce financial and energy resources among Syria’s ruling elite and their allies. This inference is bolstered by reported disputes between Syria’s Katerji Group and the “4400 Unit,” a Hezbollah network believed to be in charge of moving cash and weapons between Iran, Syria and Lebanon. The Katerji Group is friendly with Iran and has evolved into a tangle of companies that Damascus uses to get oil. The company’s importance was underlined by a recent presidential decree making it a government partner in the construction and operation of two new refineries (see “The Katerji Group: A New Key Player in the Syrian Loyalist Universe,” *OE Watch*, September 2019). **End OE Watch Commentary (Winter)**

***“Parliamentarian Waddah Murad said on his Facebook page that the reason for the increase in electric rationing recently was to divert gas to the benefit of the Russian company...”***



Lake Homs Satellite Image (showing fertilizer plant and associated factories on eastern bank).

Source: Berkaysenkalfa via Wikimedia Commons, [https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Lake\\_Homs\\_Satellite.png](https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Lake_Homs_Satellite.png), CC by 3.0

**Source:** “Abu Dhabi defence group Edge looks to smart technology to tackle low-tech militants,” *The National*, 18 November 2019. <https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/abu-dhabi-defence-group-edge-looks-to-smart-technology-to-tackle-low-tech-militants-1.939217>

He said Edge is “investing heavily” in autonomous capabilities “whether for drones, cars, ships, or drones for package delivery. Autonomous is autonomous.” Mr Al Bannai named quantum computing as one of the biggest emerging opportunities and “an area we will be aggressively investing in.” He cautioned, however, that quantum computing is still a very new - and relatively unproven - field. The company is also making investments in technology for electronic warfare including hardware-software like sensors, cameras and radar... He credits the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Programme and the nuclear power plant at Barakah for enticing a new crop of UAE students to study space and nuclear physics, among other now in-demand jobs domestically, and sees Edge as playing a similar role.

**Source:** “UAE’s EDGE Conglomerate to be Largest Exhibitor at Dubai Airshow,” *Al-Defaiya*, 7 November 2019. <https://www.defaiya.com/news/Regional%20News/UAE/2019/11/07/uae-s-edge-conglomerate-to-be-largest-exhibitor-at-dubai-airshow>

“Technology is drastically changing the aerospace industry, and EDGE is taking significant strides to respond with agile, bold and disruptive solutions - bringing products to market faster and more efficiently,” said His Excellency Faisal Al Bannai, CEO and Managing Director, EDGE. “With Air Force and Air Defence being key areas of focus for militaries, we are invested in reimagining aviation capabilities and supporting its unprecedented growth and development, through technology exploration in areas such as autonomous vehicles, cyber-physical systems, advanced propulsion systems and robotics, with a focus on artificial intelligence across our products and services. The Dubai Airshow gives us an opportunity to deepen our strategic relationships within the aerospace industry,” he added.

**Source:** “Localization of Saudi military industry to support economic diversification,” *Arab News*, 11 November 2019. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1582606/saudi-arabia>

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## Continued: Competition over Scarce Energy in Syria

Source: سوريا.. حالات اختناق بين تلاميذ في المدارس نتيجة انبعاث غازات  
 “Syria... School Students Choking Due to Gas Exhaust,” *Snack Syrian*, 6 November 2019. <https://tinyurl.com/r7kul76>

*The people of the town, located in the southwestern countryside of Homs, have for a long time been suffering from the effects of smoke issued by the “Alcalantro” factory that the Russian company invested in at the beginning of this year. This is not the first time that poison in the smoke has caused breathing problems and spread chest and lung diseases, in addition to damaging local crops and houses...*

*In early September the people succeeded in pushing the Russian company to stop the factory, after their sit-in in the town. Later, on the heels of the protest, Minister of Industry Muhammad Ma’an Jazbah and Governor of Homs Talal Al-Barazi both visited the town and met with the people and made promises to intensify their efforts to help them end the health hazards without affecting plant operations, which resumed shortly thereafter with the other plants, and as usual the promises evaporated in the air.*

Source: الشركات الروسية تتحكم بأرزاق آلاف العمال السوريين  
 “Russian Companies Control the Livelihood of Thousands of Syrian Workers,” *Enab Baladi*, 27 October 2019. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/338122>

*Al-Watan newspaper, which is close to the Syrian regime, reported on October 24 that a labor-related problem appeared after Russian company STG Engineering took over Tartous Port. One of the Russian investing company’s private contractors met with the port workers, separate from their union organization, to try to impose new work contracts that did away with basic labor laws, which led them to complain for fear of being fired...*

*The steps taken by the company investing in Tartous Port are similar to ones taken by Russian company Stroytransgaz in the recently fertilizer company in Homs, which it took over per a contract with the Syrian regime. After the Russian company acquired the fertilizer company, the administration reduced the number of employees and let at least 1,200 of them go, transferring them to other government institutions and factories. The Russian investor company also opened the way for dismissed and retired employees to return to their work under a new contract system.*

Source: الشركات الروسية تتحكم بأرزاق آلاف العمال السوريين  
 “Syrian Parliament: Accusations that Russia Company Behind Electricity Rationing,” *Enab Baladi*, 1 December 2019. <https://www.enabbaladi.net/archives/346369>

*Parliamentarian Waddah Murad said on his Facebook page that the reason for the increase in electric rationing recently was to divert gas to the benefit of the Russian company, which has invested in the fertilizer plant in Homs.*

Source: خلافات مالية بين الحاج براء و«4400» بعد صفقة غرايس  
 “Financial Disagreements between Hajj Baraa and ‘4400’ After Grace-1 Contract,” *al-Jarida*, 8 November 2019. <https://www.aljarida.com/articles/1573146446843579100/>

*Al-Jarida learned from a well-informed source that major financial disputes have occurred recently between Al-Katerji International Group, which is owned by Baraa Qaterji (aka Haj Baraa), Syria’s “oil emperor” who effectively controls the Syrian oil trade, and “Unit 4400,” which is believed to run the business and commercial projects of Iran and Hezbollah in Syria and the region, and which is headed by Muhammad Jaafar Kassir, known as Haji Fadi, and brother-in-law of party leader Hassan Nasrallah. The source said that the reason for the disagreements is the Al-Katerji Group’s failure to pay its debts to Iran, due to the lack of cash liquidity in the Syrian Central Bank, and the group’s inability to transfer money and other benefits to partners in Iran and Hezbollah... He revealed that the Katerji group was the one that transported the cargo from the Iranian oil tanker, “Grace 1”, which anchored off the coast of Syria, to its own tanker Yasmine, before distributing the oil inside Syria, per a contract the two had previously signed...*



## The Future of Iraq's Peshmerga Forces

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Peshmerga, meaning ‘those who face death first,’ are the armed forces of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRG), but they are not a unified national army. With the exception of some being under the Ministry of Peshmerga, they are two separate forces under two separate command structures, each loyal to one of the two parties that make up the KRG-- the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). They take orders from their political leaders rather than a centralized command. Unifying and professionalizing those two command structures to form a Kurdish national army has been under consideration for some time now. The accompanying articles from *Rudaw* discuss the future of the Peshmerga forces.



The soldiers of Kurdistan region commonly referred to as Peshmerga.  
Source: [www.kurdistan24.net](http://www.kurdistan24.net) via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peshmerga\\_parade.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Peshmerga_parade.jpg), Public Domain

In 2017, the Ministry of Peshmerga formed a supreme committee and after some brainstorming, came up with a long-term 35-step reform plan entitled “Peshmergas of the Future.” These steps included digitizing the payroll, improving communications, writing a national security strategy, and reviewing operation readiness. Despite this ambitious plan, the KRG has not made significant progress in reforming the Peshmerga forces, but the issue remains on the agenda. As the first accompanying article discusses, the President of the KRG, Nechirvan Barzani recently spoke at the graduation ceremony of Peshmerga officers from Zakho Military Academy, and reiterated the KRG needs a national military force that is disciplined, united, and above parties. He further stated that the KRG needs to learn from its past mistakes and create a force with centralized command and control structure to “successfully conclude the Peshmerga Ministry reform process.”

Currently, the Iraqi constitution allows the Kuridsh regional government to keep its own military force. However, there have also been discussions about incorporating the Peshmerga Forces into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The second article analyzes this option. The article states that in October 2019 the Defense Minister of Iraq, Najah al-Shammari stressed “the need for unity and coordination between the Peshmerga and the ISF” to a delegation from the Peshmerga Ministry. Before the September 2017 referendum for Kurdish independence, ISF and Peshmerga successfully carried out coordinated operations against ISIS. However, in November 2019 Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi stated that “the constitution needs to be amended” to unite the two forces. The KRG opposes such an amendment because it may limit the power of its autonomous region, and result in losing its own armed forces. In the past Iraqi prime ministers have made statements regarding placing Peshmerga Forces under the command and control structure of ISF. However, incorporating the Peshmerga into ISF does not appear likely in the near future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

**“Kurdistan Region needs a [military] force that is united behind national goals as well as [being] above all political, partisan, ethnic, religious and sectarian purposes...”**

**Source:** “Nêçîrvan Barzanî: Kurdistanê pêwîstî bi hêzeke niştimanî heye (Nechirvan Barzani: We need a national armed forces),” *Rudaw.net*, 12 November 2019. <https://www.rudaw.net/kurmanci/kurdistan/121120193>

*The President of Kurdistan Region Nechirvan Barzani stated that the Peshmerga should not be Peshmerga of parties and said, “we need a national armed force.”*

*“The Kurdistan Region needs a [military] force that is united behind national goals as well as [being] above all political, partisan, ethnic, religious and sectarian purposes...A force that defends the country and its peoples’ achievements”*

*“It should not be a force of political parties and groups. It should stay away from internal disagreements and rivalry. Kurdistan’s Peshmerga forces should never be guided by political intentions or political issues.”*

**Source:** Paul Iddon, “Will the Peshmerga reform – or be integrated into the Iraqi Army?” *Rudaw.net*, 20 November 2019. <https://www.rudaw.net/english/analysis/201120191>

*There is renewed talk about the future status of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces ranging from uniting the two predominant Peshmerga units in Kurdistan to broadly unifying the group with the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)....*

*This is the latest instance of calls and plans to unify the Peshmerga which are largely, with the exception of forces under the command of the Ministry of Peshmerga, loyal to the leading parties in the Kurdistan Region – the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which controls the 70 Unit, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which controls the 80 Unit.*

...

*In mid-October, during a meeting with a delegation from the Ministry of Peshmerga, Iraqi Defense Minister Najah al-Shammari highlighted the need for unity and coordination between the Peshmerga and the ISF against the common enemy embodied by the Islamic State (ISIS)....*

*This month, Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi said the constitution needs to be amended.*

*The Kurdistan Region is wary of any amendments being made to the constitution... This is because of the Kurds’ fear that certain amendments could potentially limit their constitutionally-enshrined autonomy. ...*

*In July, former Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi called for the Peshmerga to be integrated into the ISF alongside the PMF.*

...

*If the Iraqi Constitution is amended in the near future in disregard of Kurdistan’s objections, history indicates that the region will not willingly sacrifice any of its hard-won autonomy or control over its revered Peshmerga.*





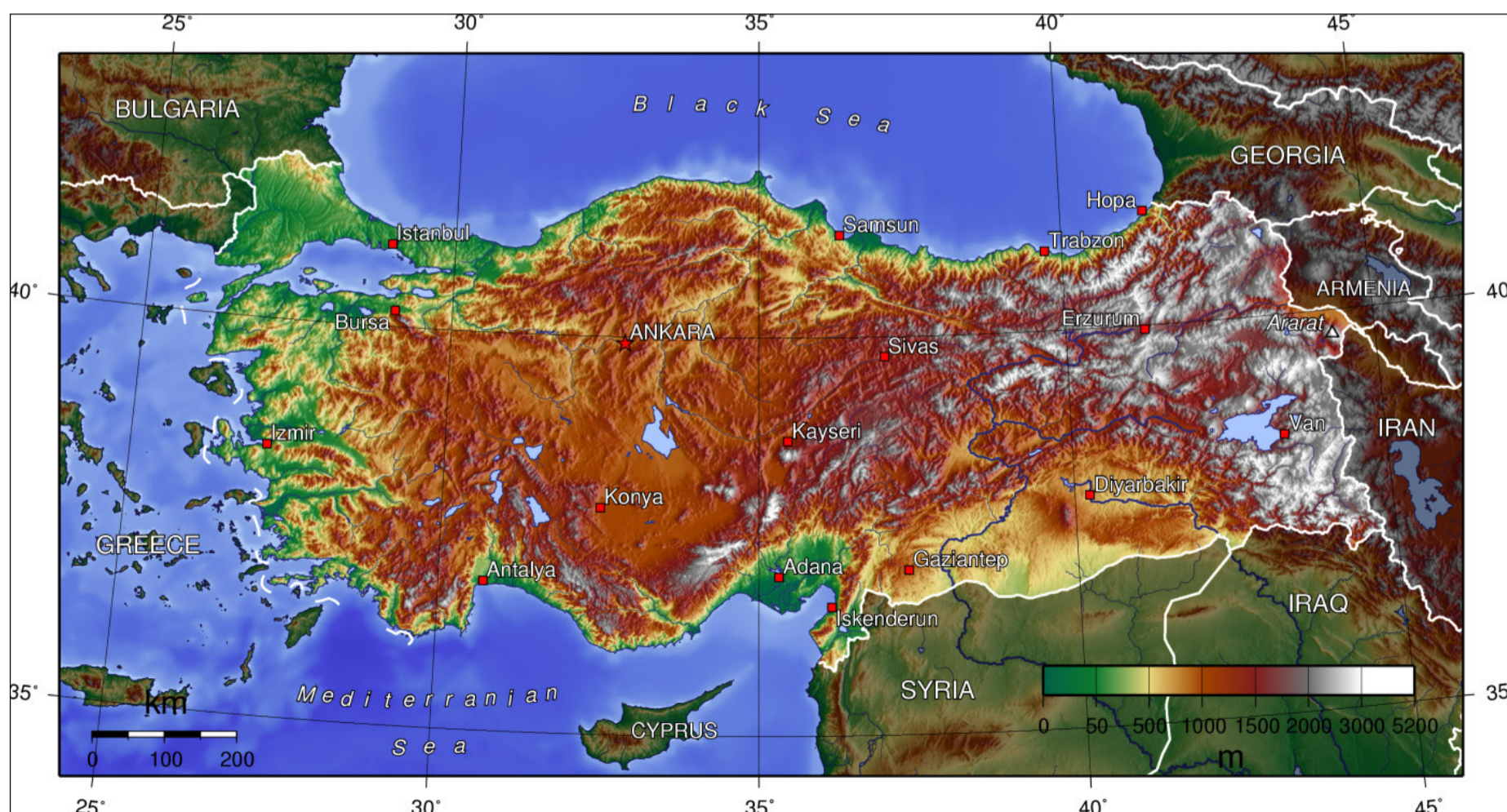
## Turkey's "Blue Homeland" Doctrine and Agreement with Libya

**OE Watch Commentary:** In late February 2019, Turkey held one of the largest naval exercises in its history, called "Blue Homeland." While these exercises took place simultaneously in all seas surrounding the country, the center of gravity was the Eastern Mediterranean. The objective was not only to display Turkey's naval capabilities, but also to project power to those countries claiming rights to the overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZ) over natural gas explorations in the Eastern Mediterranean. While the first accompanying article provides a critical analysis of the Blue Homeland doctrine, the second article discusses the recently signed agreement between Turkey and Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) on maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea, noting that it changes the geopolitical power balance in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The author of the first passage Cengiz Aktar, a respected Turkish political scientist, states that this agreement is a product of Turkey's Blue Homeland doctrine. Blue Homeland, which covers 178,379 square miles, was revealed by now-retired Admiral Ramazan Cem Gürdeniz in 2006 "during a symposium at the Turkish Naval Forces Command Centre." It covers nearly half of the eastern Mediterranean, ignoring "the continental shelves of the islands of Cyprus, and the Greek islands of Rhodes, Kastellorizo, Karpathos, Kassos and the eastern section of Crete." The doctrine also includes large maritime boundaries of the Black and Aegean seas. The author considers Turkey's efforts to establish military bases in Qatar, Somalia, and Suakin Island "to project power in the Gulf and Red Sea" as part of "the next steps in this doctrine." The author states that the Blue Homeland doctrine "fits perfectly with [Turkish President] Erdoğan's coercive foreign policy." Turkey's exploration and drilling for natural gas within the EEZ of Republic of Cyprus, frequent "violation of Greek airspace and now the Libya deal" are clear examples of this foreign policy. The author concludes with saying the individuals like Admiral Gürdeniz now dominate Turkey's maritime policy and its neighbors and NATO allies "will be compelled to cope with this highly perilous style of foreign relations" moving forward.

According to the second article from Turkey's state-owned *Anadolu Ajansi*, the agreement between Turkey and Libya demarking new maritime boundaries in the Mediterranean Sea prevented Greece, Egypt, the Republic of Cyprus and Israel from signing an agreement with Libya that would have excluded Turkey. With this agreement, Turkey aims to achieve several objectives. First, Turkey sees this agreement as a step towards protecting its maritime rights under the international law of the sea. Second, this agreement should put other littoral states on notice as they have excluded Turkey from the Eastern Mediterranean Gas Forum, hopefully causing these countries to reconsider their decision to exclude Turkey. Third, this agreement demarks Turkey's maritime boundaries in the west. Finally, coupled with a discussion regarding the building of a natural gas pipeline from Cyprus to Turkey, this agreement will force other littoral states to come to the negotiating table with Turkey. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***"The agreement with Libya is a product of Turkey's Mavi Vatan [Blue Homeland] doctrine."***



Topographical map of Turkey.

Source: Captain Blood via Wikimedia commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey\\_topo.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Turkey_topo.jpg), CC-BY-3.0



## Continued: Turkey's "Blue Homeland" Doctrine and Agreement with Libya

***“The maritime jurisdiction delimitation agreement signed between Libya and Turkey is a critical move which will profoundly affect the geopolitics of the region...”***

**Source:** Cengiz Aktar, “Turkey’s expanding naval horizons,” *Ahvalnews.com*, 5 December 2019. <https://ahvalnews.com/east-mediterranean/turkeys-expanding-naval-horizons>

*Mavi Vatan, or Blue Homeland – Turkey’s doctrine claiming extensive maritime jurisdiction in the Aegean and Mediterranean seas – is back in the news with an agreement that Libya’s Tripoli government and its main backers in Ankara announced last week.*

*The two governments concluded an agreement on Nov. 28 on their respective sea borders that sees the two countries as maritime neighbours, drawing Turkey’s marine boundaries across an area that discounts maritime claims of Greek islands, including Crete....*

*The agreement with Libya is a product of Turkey’s Mavi Vatan doctrine. As far as its Mediterranean portion is concerned, it refers to a huge sea area across half of the eastern Mediterranean that ignores the continental shelves of the islands of Cyprus, and the Greek islands of Rhodes, Kastellorizo, Karpathos, Kassos and the eastern section of Crete.*

...

*Turkey’s effort to project power in the Gulf and Red Sea with military bases in Qatar and Somali, and a planned naval base on Sudan’s Suakin Island are the next steps in this doctrine.*

...

*It is no exaggeration to say that Turkey’s maritime policy is now being “navigated” by informal, but very influential clusters of individuals, headed by the likes of Gürdeniz.*

*Turkey’s neighbours and its NATO allies, starting with Greece, will be compelled to cope with this highly perilous style of foreign relations in the months and years to come.*

**Source:** Dr. İlhan Sağsen, “Türkiye-Libya anlaşması: Doğu Akdeniz’de jeopolitik denklem değişiyor (Turkey-Libya agreement: changing geopolitical equation in the Eastern Mediterranean),” *Anatolia Agency*, 2 December 2019. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/turkiye-libya-anlasmasi-dogu-akdeniz-de-jeopolitik-denklemler-degisiyor/1661248>

*With the discovery of energy resources, the Eastern Mediterranean has become a critical area not only for control of Mediterranean trade routes but also for the struggle over energy. The energy factor has changed the geopolitical importance of the Eastern Mediterranean...*

...

*When looking at the Eastern Mediterranean issue from the perspective of international law, it is seen that the regional and international actors who are interested in the energy resources of the region want to have the most maritime jurisdiction with the desire to have the most resources and in this respect, they try to putting forth different arguments to[justify] their actions.*

*The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Economy and Energy Minister Hassan Taçoy stated the establishment of a natural gas pipeline between Turkey and TRNC... by 2025.*

*The maritime jurisdiction delimitation agreement signed between Libya and Turkey is a critical move which will profoundly affect geopolitics of the region...*

...

*This critical move has drawn reaction from the Republic of Cyprus, Israel, and Egypt...*

...

*As a preliminary agreement, this memorandum primarily defined the western border of Turkey’s maritime jurisdiction.*

*This agreement prevented Greece, Egypt, the Republic of Cyprus and Israel from signing a jurisdiction delimitation agreement with Libya at the expense of Turkey.*





## Turkey's New "Bozdoğan" Air-to-Air Missile

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkey continues to add more indigenous military hardware to its military's inventory. The latest addition is the "Bozdoğan" air-to-air missile, as discussed in the accompanying passage.

As the passage notes, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced the successful completion of a guided launch pad test firing and the mass production of this indigenous air-to-air missile. He continued by saying that the missile flies well above the speed of sound with high maneuverability. Bozdoğan will be added to the inventory of the Turkish Armed Forces after undergoing test firing from aircraft next year. The Turkish President also stated, "in addition to our air-to-ground weapons used in our warplanes, now our air-to-air missiles will also be domestic and when it is integrated into national combat aircraft, will increase the nationalization of our air defense system." Only nine countries in the world are currently capable of producing air-to-air missiles.



Air-to-air missile by TÜBİTAK-SAGE at the IDEF 2019 in Istanbul, Turkey, 2 May 2019.

Source: CeeGee via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:G%C3%B6ktu%C4%9F.jpg>, CC BY-SA 4.0

The Bozdoğan air-to-air missile system was developed as part of the Göktüğ project, run by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and Defense Industries Research and Development Institute (SAGE). The Göktüğ project has other missiles under development as well. Bozdoğan was tested for ballistic launches from the ground in 2017 and the test showed the missile's successful engine performance and its ability to destroy targets without guidance. The missile is also equipped with high thrust-low smoke solid fuel technology with full electronic rocket engine safe start and ignition system, among other things. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

**“...Domestic air-to-air missile Bozdoğan has successfully completed its guided launch pad test firing...”**

**Source:** “Bozdoğan Füzesi, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerinin envanterine girecek (Bozdoğan Missile to be included in the inventory of Turkish Armed Forces),” [hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/teknoloji/bozdogan-fuzesi-turk-silahli-kuvvetlerinin-envanterine-girecek-41383036), 26 November 2019. <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/teknoloji/bozdogan-fuzesi-turk-silahli-kuvvetlerinin-envanterine-girecek-41383036>

*The Bozdoğan Missile, developed by TUBITAK Defense Industry Research and Development Institute (SAGE) within the scope of Göktüğ Project, will be included in the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) inventory after the completion of a test fire from an aircraft in 2020...*

*The Ministry of Industry and Technology... made a written statement regarding Bozdoğan missiles.*

*It was communicated that [Turkey's] domestic air-to-air missile Bozdoğan has successfully completed its guided launch pad test firing...*

...

*Bozdoğan was produced by our engineers, during the test the missile engaged a target at an altitude of about 4 kilometers [over 2 miles] in the air, and the shot was successfully completed. Flying well above the speed of sound and having high maneuverability, this missile will undergo test firing from an aircraft in 2020...*

*With Bozdoğan being integrated into our national combat aircraft, Turkey will use its own weapons in its own aircraft. With air to air missiles being produced by only 9 countries in the world, the rate of localization of our air defense system will increase.*





## Is ISIS Relocating to Turkey to Reorganize?

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying article from *Al-Monitor* discusses several factors that suggest ISIS might be relocating to Turkey as it tries to re-group and adapt following its loss of territory in Iraq and Syria. The author warns that “the regrouping of IS cells in Turkey poses a threat to the entire world.”

From the inception of the Syrian Civil War, individuals from European and other countries inspired by extremist Islamist ideology flooded into Syria. Turkey was a transit country for those foreign fighters seeking to reach Syria. This situation eventually led to the establishment of ISIS networks and recruitment efforts in major Turkish cities. In 2018, Turkish journalist Doğu Eroğlu published a book titled *ISIS Networks: Radicalization, Organization, and Logistics in Turkey*, in which he revealed that Turkish cities including Gaziantep (which borders Syria), Konya, Adana, and especially Istanbul and Ankara had become ISIS strongholds (see “Radicalization and ISIS Networks in Turkey,” *OE Watch*, October 2018). While during the past couple of years the Turkish government launched operations against ISIS inside Turkey, the author points out that “Turkey — the logistics lifeline of jihadi movements in Iraq and Syria — has failed to clear its own backyard of jihadi threats.”



Mourning after the 2015 Ankara bombings.

Source: Yıldız Yazıcıoğlu, VOA, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mourning\\_after\\_the\\_2015\\_Ankara\\_bombings\\_\(2\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mourning_after_the_2015_Ankara_bombings_(2).jpg), Public Domain.

According to the author, a number of indicators show that ISIS “has designated Turkey as its next reorganization base.” First, the fact that the leader of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his spokesperson Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir were killed so close to the Turkish border points to Turkey being ISIS’ next destination. Second, “[t]he arrests of so many IS[IS]’ members by Turkish security forces are another sign of IS[IS]’ intention to create cells in the country.” Another indicator is the information that came from Iraqi intelligence sources. These sources have provided credible intelligence to Turkish officials that some important ISIS leaders have relocated to Turkey. The article notes that Turkish and Iraqi intelligence services have cooperated in the past to capture ISIS members in Turkey. The article also provides information about the businesses ISIS has set up across Turkey to finance its operations in the region. Most importantly ISIS networks used a software called al-Haram in Turkey and Syria for money transfers and operated several foreign currency exchange offices and jewelry shops to generate capital. It is important to note the cities where those businesses were set up overlap with the cities Journalist Doğu Eroğlu revealed in his research. The author claims Turkey has not allocated sufficient resources to dismantle ISIS networks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

According to the author, a number of indicators show that ISIS “has designated Turkey as its next reorganization base.” First, the fact that the leader of ISIS Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his spokesperson Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir were killed so close to the Turkish border points to Turkey being ISIS’ next destination. Second, “[t]he arrests of so many IS[IS]’ members by Turkish security forces are another sign of IS[IS]’ intention to create cells in the country.” Another indicator is the information that came from Iraqi intelligence sources. These sources have provided credible intelligence to Turkish officials that some important ISIS leaders have relocated to Turkey. The article notes that Turkish and Iraqi intelligence services have cooperated in the past to capture ISIS members in Turkey. The article also provides information about the businesses ISIS has set up across Turkey to finance its operations in the region. Most importantly ISIS networks used a software called al-Haram in Turkey and Syria for money transfers and operated several foreign currency exchange offices and jewelry shops to generate capital. It is important to note the cities where those businesses were set up overlap with the cities Journalist Doğu Eroğlu revealed in his research. The author claims Turkey has not allocated sufficient resources to dismantle ISIS networks. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

**“There are credible indications that the Islamic State... after losing its territorial dominance in Iraq and Syria, has designated Turkey as its next reorganization base.”**

**Source:** Fehim Taştekin, “IS designates Turkey as its next base,” *Al-monitor.com*, 26 November 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/11/turkey-syria-iraq-are-isis-cells-regrouping-in-country.html>

*Turkey — the logistics lifeline of jihadi movements in Iraq and Syria — has failed to clear its own backyard of jihadi threats. There are credible indications that the Islamic State (IS), after losing its territorial dominance in Iraq and Syria, has designated Turkey as its next reorganization base.*

*The killings of IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and his spokesman Abu al-Hassan al-Muhajir so close to the Turkish border were clear signs that IS’ next destination was Turkey. There are, of course, other pertinent developments.*

*The arrest of so many IS members by Turkish security forces are another sign of IS’ intention to create cells in the country.*

*Iraqi intelligence sources have provided solid information that the brains of IS have moved to Turkey. The United States has tracked the jewelry shops and foreign currency exchanges used by IS in money transfers....*

*The operation revealed that IS operatives in Syria and Turkey used a computer program called al-Haram for money transfers. Turkish security determined that these companies were operating in the Turkish provinces of Istanbul, Ankara, Gaziantep, Adana, Mersin, Hatay, Sanliurfa, Antalya, Ankara, Izmir, Kayseri and Konya.*

....

*If there is financial activity, then the presence of cells is inevitable.*

...

*It’s open to debate how much capacity Turkey has to mobilize against IS, and whether this is sufficient to cope with the threat. Turkey’s security and intelligence services have been dedicating the bulk of their capabilities to eradicating the Gulen movement and to suppressing domestic opposition, as led by the Kurds. Of course, the government totally dismisses any criticisms that it’s weak in combating IS.*

....

*The regrouping of IS cells in Turkey poses a threat to the entire world. Ankara is aware that its mistakes in combating IS pose a danger. There are several shortcomings in Ankara’s handling of the matter.*





## Challenges in Turkish-Russian Relations



Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan 26 July 2018.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_and\\_Recep\\_Tayyip\\_Erdogan\\_26\\_july\\_2018\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Recep_Tayyip_Erdogan_26_july_2018_(1).jpg), CC-BY-4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Turkish-Russian relations have improved significantly since Turkey shot down two Russian fighter jets in 2015. Russia has become the largest supplier of natural gas to Turkish markets and a major trading partner while the number of Turkish companies operating in Russian markets has increased tremendously. Despite being on opposing sides of many conflicts (e.g. Libya and Syria), both countries have managed to maintain momentum for rapprochement. Most importantly, Turkey acquired the Russian S-400, a surface-to-air missile defense system, despite objections from its NATO allies. Beneath the surface, however, is a Turkish-Russian relationship that is on shaky ground, according to the accompanying article by a Turkish expert.

As the author points out, there are three thorny issues that may challenge Turkish and Russian rapprochement in the near future. The first is the situation of the Kurds in Syria.

A sustainable and lasting peace in Syria requires finding a resolution for the Kurdish issue in Syria. Ankara has remained silent as Moscow engages with the Kurds and has proposed the inclusion of Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights in the Syrian constitution. Moscow's effort to incorporate the YPG into the Syrian regime's military also has not received any condemnation from Ankara. The author states that Turkey's silence does not mean consent; rather it is likely that Ankara is trying to avoid conflict with Moscow.

The future of radical and terrorist groups and the situation of Idlib is another thorny issue that may cause tension between Turkey and Russia. The majority of these radical groups are either in Idlib or in Turkish-controlled territories in Syria. Turkey and Russia signed a deal in September 2018 to settle the Idlib issue by creating a demilitarized zone between government troops and militants and Turkey promised to clear Idlib of extremist militant groups. Since then Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a Salafist group linked to al-Qaeda has resumed control in Idlib. Turkey has long argued that a potential joint Russian-Syrian regime operation in Idlib could create a humanitarian crisis and cause an influx of refugees and radical militants to Turkey. Russia is also disturbed by the Turkey-backed Syrian National Army. The author states that addressing the future of these extremist elements is one of the most complex issues in Turkish-Russian relations.

The third issue is political stability in Turkey. The current Turkish government has afforded many opportunities to Russia including purchasing the S-400, building the Turkish Stream pipeline to increase natural gas dependence on Russia, loosening restrictions on Russian submarine passage through the Bosphorus, establishing a naval facility in Mersin, and opportunities to take advantages of Turkish markets. Also, Turkey's internal political dynamics and being isolated internationally has created an asymmetrical relationship with Russia, which Russia exploits. However, a potential government change in Turkey would pose a challenge for Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Gündüz)**

***“...The current political will in Ankara is invaluable for the Kremlin. A change in political climate in Ankara may not provide such an [opportunity] for Kremlin...”***

**Source:** Dr. Kerim Has, “Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinde üç risk, bir fırsat (Three risks, one opportunity in Turkish-Russian relations)” *Karar.com*, 20 November 2019. <https://www.karar.com/gorusler/turkiye-rusya-iliskilerinde-uc-risk-bir-firsat-1388928>

*The most active fault line: the Kurdish issue*

*[Solving] the chronic Kurdish problem... was not Russia's objective when entering Syria... [it] is now about to become one of the most serious obstacles to [Russia] to achieving its objectives. Developing constructive and creative remedies to the Kurdish problem is not only part of Moscow's efforts to provide stability in Syria, a resolution would prevent the issue from taking all of Turkish-Russian relations hostage...*

...

*The second risky [issue] that has potential to take Turkish-Russian relations hostage is the future of terrorist and radical jihadist groups in the region. Many of these terrorist organizations and radical jihadist groups are... now either in Idlib or under the Turkish Army controlled Afrin-Azaz-Jarabulus line and Tell Abyad- Ras Al Ayn line...*

*Negative impacts of an operation on Idlib affecting Turkey is a nightmare scenario for Russia as well...*

*...Moscow, which is about to expand their operation in Idlib, is disturbed by the Syrian National Army (SMO) components... as much as HTŞ [Hayat Tahrir el-Şam] in the region.*

*It is true that Moscow is pleased that President Erdogan has currently partially consolidated his political power... The current political will in Ankara is invaluable for the Kremlin. A change in political climate in Ankara may not provide such an [opportunity] for Kremlin...*

...

*Besides the risks at the doorsteps of Turkey-Russia relations, there are, of course, opportunities... At present, among these opportunities the only remarkable and the most important is to make the Adana Accord dating back to 1998 operational with Moscow mediating between Ankara and Damascus...*



## Iran, China, and Russia Plan Joint Naval Drills in Indian Ocean



"Hossein Khanzadi," Tasnim News Agency.  
Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hossein\\_Khanzadi.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hossein_Khanzadi.jpg), CC BY 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying excerpts discuss planned naval exercises between Iran, China, and Russia in the Indian Ocean. As the first excerpt from the Iran's *Tehran Times* notes, the exercises were announced by the Iranian Naval Commander Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi on 27 November, when Khanzadi noted that the initial planning for the drills had been carried out and the three countries were "scheduled to conduct a tripartite military exercise in the north Indian Ocean in the near future." The announcement came as Rear Admiral Khanzadi also announced that a new Mowj-class (Wave-class) destroyer called the Dena would join the Iranian Navy in early 2020. In the second passage from the Iran's *Fars News Agency*, Khanzadi noted the exercise would be code-named Marine Security Belt and would begin on 27 December. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov states in the third excerpt from the Russian News site *TASS* that "Russia, China and Iran intend to train anti-terrorism and anti-piracy efforts."

The excerpt from the *South China Morning Post* points out "Major General Mohammad Baqeri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, was in Beijing for a three-day visit in early September and agreed that the two countries would have more visits with senior military officials and advance cooperation in training." The last military drills between China and Iran took place in June 2017 in the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, the article asserts that "China still accounts for more than half of Iran's oil exports." The fifth passage from *Al-Monitor* discusses limits under which the Chinese-Iranian relationship is developing. The Chinese Navy is limiting its participation to only non-combatant forces in the naval drills, as it wants to "make clear its desire not to be drawn into Middle East conflicts."

The final excerpt from the Iranian *Mehr News Agency* offers the Iranian perspective of the significance behind the naval exercises. Rear Admiral Hossein Khanzadi stated that the naval drills between Russia, China, and Iran show, "these three countries have reached a meaningful strategic point in their relations," and that the three states have respect for each nation's non-shared national interests. The Rear Admiral also said military exercises between states, "indicates a remarkable expansion of cooperation." **End OE Watch Commentary (Fesen)**

***"These three countries have reached a meaningful strategic point in their relations, with regard to their shared and non-shared interests, and by non-shared I mean the respect we have for one another's national interests."***

**Source:** "Navy chief: New homegrown destroyer to join Iran navy soon," *Tehran Times*, 27 November 2019. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/442431/Navy-chief-New-homegrown-destroyer-to-join-Iran-navy-soon>

...Khanzadi said Dena, which has been designed and manufactured by domestic military experts, will join the navy's fleet in the Iranian month of Bahman (January 1, 2020 – February 19), Tasnim reported....The commander said Dena is a new Mowj-class (Wave-class) destroyer similar to the Jamaran and the Sahand destroyers.

Khanzadi also said the naval forces of Iran, China and Russia are scheduled to conduct a tripartite military exercise in the north Indian Ocean in the near future. ...naval drills will be carried out after this one, all of which are considered as an exercise for the upcoming Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) conference in late February to boost convergence among naval forces in order to settle security in the north Indian Ocean...





## Continued: Iran, China, and Russia Plan Joint Naval Drills in Indian Ocean

**Source:** “Commander: Iran, Russia, China to Stage Joint Naval Drills on December 27,” *Fars News*, 3 December 2019. <https://en.farsnews.com/newstext.aspx?nn=13980912001131>

*“The joint drills of Iran, China and Russia codenamed Marine Security Belt will be staged on December 27,” Rear Admiral Khanzadi said...*

**Source:** “Iran, Russia, China to hold joint naval drills in Indian Ocean soon,” *TASS*, 27 November 2019. <https://tass.com/defense/1093609>

*Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said on October 2 that during the upcoming exercises, Russia, China and Iran are intended to train anti-terrorism and anti-piracy efforts.*

**Source:** Zhuang Pinghui, “China, Russia, Iran ‘plan joint naval drill in international waters,’” *South China Morning Post*, 21 September 2019. <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3029819/china-russia-iran-plan-joint-naval-drill-international-waters>

*Two years ago China and Iran conducted a joint naval exercise near the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf... Major General Mohammad Baqeri, Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces, was in Beijing for a three-day visit earlier this month and agreed that the two countries would have more visits with senior military officials and advance cooperation in training.... China still accounts for more than half of Iran’s oil exports...*

**Source:** Mohsen Shariatinia, “Tehran welcomes China’s presence in Middle East,” *Al-Monitor*, 14 November 2019. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2019/11/iran-welcome-china-presence-middle-east.html>

*China is expected to limit its involvement in the planned joint naval drill with Iran and Russia to noncombat forces, making clear its desire not to be drawn into Middle East conflicts.*

**Source:** “Iran’s joint wargame with Russia, China delivers message to world,” *Mehr News*, 27 November 2019. <https://en.mehrnews.com/news/152759/Iran-s-joint-wargame-with-Russia-China-delivers-message-to-world>

*“A joint wargame between several countries, whether on land, at sea or in the air, indicates a remarkable expansion of cooperation among them,” he noted.*

*... “these three countries have reached a meaningful strategic point in their relations, with regard to their shared and non-shared interests, and by non-shared I mean the respect we have for one another’s national interests.”*

## Compendium of Central Asian Military and Security Activity

By Matthew Stein

Since Central Asian states gained independence in 1991, new regional military and security alliances have been created (some of which are Russian-led), new military partnerships with non-NATO countries have been established, a number of joint military exercises have been conducted, over a dozen high-profile incidents of violence and civil unrest have taken place, and military installations have been used by foreign militaries. While this activity gained attention, it has not been collectively compiled. A compilation of this activity can serve as a guide for current and future military and security involvement in Central Asia.



<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/194880>



## Iran and Russia to Establish Visa Waivers

**OE Watch Commentary:** In a lengthy interview with the Fars News Agency, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Deputy Cultural Minister Vali Teymouri highlights the importance of tourism to Iran, especially as a mechanism to make up revenue lost due to sanctions.

As the accompanying passages from the interview demonstrate, Teymouri argues that the average tourist brings in far more revenue to the country than a single barrel of oil, and that positive experiences within Iran could rapidly increase revenue. For example, he suggests that an average tourist could bring six or seven others to the country, while an unsatisfied tourist could dissuade a dozen others considering making the trip.

In order to jump-start tourism, Teymouri highlights the importance of advertisement, especially for the domestic market, and complains that Iran has yet to tap the full potential of the domestic market. Teymouri's hope for domestic tourism appears unrealistic, as Iranians protesting their economic plight and struggling to put food on the table are unlikely to have disposable income for a beach or mountain vacation.

While Teymouri blames United States sanctions for making travel to Iran more difficult for foreign tourists, he conveniently ignores the fact that Iranian security forces have repeatedly taken US and European citizens hostage to use as pawns in attempts to coerce diplomatic and economic concessions from the West. This reflects a frequent cognitive dissonance among 'reformists' in Iran who are powerless to stop malign security force activities and therefore simply ignore them in analysis. Within Iranian political discourse, speaking critically about the IRGC's domestic role is a redline.

While Fars News headlined the decision to implement visa waivers with Russia, the fact that this appears limited to group travel suggests residual distrust in either Moscow, Tehran, or both about the security risks the citizens of each pose to the other. Russia and Iran might be in the midst of a historic rapprochement, but popular distrust remains in Iran to a country that, up until the mid-twentieth century, had imperial ambitions in Iran. Teymouri suggested that earlier loosening of visa requirements with Oman and Azerbaijan provided a model.

Teymouri notes that Iran has "one million Turkish tourists" now and claims that this has been able to offset the impact of sanctions on tourism. If this is accurate, it is significant, as he suggests that Turkey alone could offset American sanctions. However, the figures Teymouri cites about average revenue per tourist appear optimistic, for it is unrealistic that Iran has raised more than \$1.5 billion from Turkish tourists alone. In reality, Iran may be mitigating shortfalls resulting from European carriers restricting direct flights to Iran and lessening high-end tourism in favor of the lower revenue regional tourist. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**



Russia and Iran draw closer with visa waivers.

Source: Mo'aser.com, <https://www.moaser.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/russia-iran-flags-1-750x430.jpg>

***“Visa waivers for group travel [between Iran and Russia] have now been finalized.”***

**Source:** “Lughu Ravadid Iran va Rusiya Bozudi/Haryek Gerdshagir = 25 Bashkeh-e Naft (Iran and Russia Visa Waivers Soon/Each Tourist = 25 Barrels of Oil),” *Fars News Agency*, 23 November 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980901000170>

### ***Iran-Russia Visa Waivers Coming***

*The deputy minister of tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism for the country said that according to international statistics, each tourist represents on average \$1,485 in revenue, while we sell oil for around \$60 per barrel.*

*Iran's tourism industry ranks third after oil and automobiles. The economy of many countries in the world relies on tourism and is a huge benefit for the people. Iran can be attractive in all four seasons and has the capacity for tourism in every province. Unfortunately, this economic and monetary potential for the people and the government has for years been ignored, and at present it is not being properly addressed.*

*...Vali Teymouri, deputy minister of tourism at the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism, spoke in detail about the state of tourism in the country, in the interview below...*

*When we talk about tourism directly and indirectly, it has an impact on employment and earnings. For example, each tourist impacts 11 jobs, and so this reflects a large volume of employment... Our problem is not only that the budget and support for tourism is low, but also that a kind of national vision, attitude and will are missing in the tourism field.*

*Until this national will is formed, we will lack the credibility to get anywhere in the field of tourism. Therefore, we must admit that tourism is at the center of development of the country.*

*Due to the sanctions, there have been no direct flights to our country from several other countries and this is an important factor in tourism today and so our emphasis on the peripheral countries increased. We have been able to attract tourists through land borders if we do not have foreign flights... We have one million Turkish tourists now and this has been able to offset the impact of sanctions on tourism...*

*One of the World Tourism Organization's recommendations has always been to facilitate the process of issuing visas in order to make it easier for people to travel to other countries... Because of U.S. sanctions, we have had difficulty issuing visas and so in order to remedy this problem and increase visas, we have implemented a number of visa waivers. Over the past few years, we have unilaterally waived visas for Azerbaijan, and this resulted in a 100-fold increase in tourists from Azerbaijan. This was also the case with Oman and the number of tourists increased....*

*Visa waivers for Russia was agreed three years ago when an agreement was reached and the foreign ministries began working on implementing specific mechanisms and visa waiver for group travel between the two countries has now been finalized and we are determined to implement it as soon as possible....*





## Iran: Use Suicide Drones as Air Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** As part of a broader report on Iranian air defense strategies, the Fars News Agency, an outlet close to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, published a lengthy analysis of Iranian defense strategies. Acknowledging air defense and the maintenance of control of the skies as a major concern for the Iranian military, the analysis suggested that the Islamic Republic could utilize “suicide interceptors” as a major component of its air defense.

Iranian resources are limited—especially under sanctions—and the article proposes that reliance on relatively cheap drones could neutralize far more expensive enemy platforms. However, it is unclear if this is true for fighter jets and bombers, because they operate at higher altitudes, have greater range and speed, and more advanced stealth technology than any Iranian drone. It is more likely that such drones could pose a risk to American helicopters participating in carrier strike group or amphibious ready group operations, or to civilian flights. A broader challenge to the operational environment might be Iran’s efforts to arm its drones with air-to-air missiles, a capability Iran may believe necessary due to the likelihood that any strike on Iran would target ground-based, stationary batteries.

Still, the excerpted article does highlight Iran’s recent suicide drone developments, such as the Sarir, unveiled in 2013 and more recently, the Karrar, which the article claims to have heat-seeking capabilities, as well as the Kian-3, unveiled in 2019. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

**“Using suicide drones for air intercepts is both smart and low-cost.”**

**Source:** “Pehpadha-ye Intehari dar Kamin-e Jangandha-ye Doshman/Mamoriyat-e Vizhe Kararha baraye Defah az Asman-e Iran (Suicide Drones against Lurking Enemy Aircraft/A Special Deployment Mission to Defend Iranian Skies),” *Fars News Agency*, 23 November 2019. <https://www.farsnews.com/news/13980828000520>

### *A Special Deployment Mission to Defend Iranian Skies*

*Using suicide drones for air interception operations is a smart and low-cost strategy to defend against the threat of expensive enemy fighters. Air defense against aerial invasion can be the most important factor in overall superiority in the combat environment, as domination of the air enables ground and sea operations to occur without interference, and that’s why military planners must consider having even minimal air superiority to be necessary...*

*In recent years, in our country, two developments in air defense have received particular attention, and these have been air defense systems and the development of unmanned aerial vehicles, leading to the design of a number of different air defense systems and drones in various configurations. But one of the common areas where air defense systems and UAVs coincide is the use of interceptor drones to conduct air interception operations, and a few examples have been suicide drones or those armed with air-to-air missiles. The Sarir, or H-110...can be described as the Army’s first air defense UAV.*



*Iran considers the potential of suicide drones as an air defense component.*

Source: Fars News Agency, [https://media.farsnews.com/Uploaded/Files/Images/1398/09/01/13980901000422\\_Test\\_PhotoN.jpg](https://media.farsnews.com/Uploaded/Files/Images/1398/09/01/13980901000422_Test_PhotoN.jpg)



## Iran: Identity Theft and Extortion in Isfahan

**OE Watch Commentary:** Traditionally, Iran's cybersecurity forces battle moral crimes such as pornography or those using social media for illicit political speech or activity. Increasingly, however, they appear focused on the rise of financial cybercrime inside Iran (see "Iran: Cyber Crime Rises," *OE Watch*, February 2016). In May 2018, for example, the Intelligence Ministry announced the arrest of hackers seeking to steal money from an Isfahan bank (see "Group Planning to Hack Bank in Iran Arrested," *OE Watch*, July 2018). This July, Iranian police warned of various telephone scams (see "Iran Warns of Phone and Text Scams," *OE Watch*, September 2019). In the excerpted article from Iran's cyber police homepage, the Isfahan cyber police branch announces that a complainant came to them to register charges of identity theft in an apparent phishing scheme that resulted in theft of their identity documents. The cybercriminal had then proceeded to harass and try to extort the complainant. The report also notes that the suspect was identified and summoned to the police.

To most non-Iranians, cyberthreats in Iran suggest Iranian attempts to hack critical infrastructure overseas or to steal personal information or to create fake social media profiles so as to gather intelligence on officials in Iraq and other countries. However, announcement of this case and the arrests suggests that Iranians increasingly suffer from domestic criminal hackers and that they appear to have confidence in the police to investigate certain cybercrimes. It is unclear whether pro-government hackers 'moonlight' in crimes against Iranians. So long as ordinary Iranians remain relatively naïve about cybersecurity, such as scanning the Iranian equivalent of social security cards or drivers' licenses onto their computers or phone, such crimes will continue. Indeed, as Iran's fiscal situation worsens, it is possible Iran will see a spike in cybercrime as financial desperation leads to more scams and online theft. **End OE Watch Commentary (Rubin)**

***“Under no circumstance should anyone store his identity documents on smart devices.”***

**Source:** “Akhazi Internet ba Sareghat-e Ettela’at-e Havyati (Internet Extortion with Theft of Personal Identity Information),” *Mehr News Agency*, 23 November 2019. <https://www.cyberpolice.ir/news/145615/آی-تی-وی-و-م-ت-ا-ع-ل-ط-ا-ت-ق-ر-س-ا-ب-ی-ت-ن-ر-ت-ن-ی-ا-ی-ذ-ا-خ/#no-back>

### ***Internet Extortion with Theft of Personal Identity Information***

*Cyberpolice Information Base:* Colonel Mohammed Reza Hassanzadeh, head of the detection and prevention department, said in a statement, “After an individual complained that an anonymous person had a photo of his identity and identity information and sent threatening messages to extort him, and it came to police attention.

*The official continued:* Initial investigation revealed that an anonymous person had access to the plaintiff's profile image and identity information accessed with the plaintiff's access code, and by sending threatening messages, sought to extort the victim.

*He mentioned:* Based on victim statement and police action, the suspect was identified and summoned to the police with technical evidence. During the interrogation, the defendant said that “I was able to obtain a picture of his identity document by sending fake promotional messages and gaining the credentials of the plaintiff by accessing the profile.” Colonel Hassanzadeh said, “Under no circumstance should anyone store his identity documents on smart devices at all.”



**Sepah Bank in Isfahan.**

Source: Contemporary Architecture of Iran, [http://caoi.ir/images/igallery/resized/3501-3600/Sepah\\_Bank\\_in\\_Isfahan\\_Iran\\_by\\_Vartan\\_Hovanesian\\_\\_1\\_-3549-800-500-100.jpg](http://caoi.ir/images/igallery/resized/3501-3600/Sepah_Bank_in_Isfahan_Iran_by_Vartan_Hovanesian__1_-3549-800-500-100.jpg)





## Sahel Conflicts Blend Jihadism and Interethnic Hostilities



*"Conflict in the Sahel is often a blend of jihadism and interethnic hostilities,"*  
 Source: Magharebia via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Qaida\\_cr%C3%A9\\_une\\_brigade\\_dirig%C3%A9e\\_par\\_des\\_Touaregs\\_\(8246938011\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al-Qaida_cr%C3%A9_une_brigade_dirig%C3%A9e_par_des_Touaregs_(8246938011).jpg), CC BY 2.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Despite several military operations against jihadists in the Sahel, including some that were quite successful, significant swaths of the territory are still controlled by the extremists, a testament in large part to their adaptability. The accompanying excerpted article from the South African *The Conversation* describes this as “the post-Jihadist era.”

The passage discusses several factors to explain this new designation. Perhaps the most significant is the fact that much of what is called “jihadist terrorism” is often actually a hybrid, with the jihadist aspect blended with unstable ethnic conflicts. Jihadists may even aggravate interethnic and community conflicts, giving them what the article calls an “Islamic veneer,” possibly obscuring the underlying social issues such as poverty, social injustice, and the absence of necessary government services that are driving the conflicts. One example is Burkina Faso, where initial conflicts were sparked by concerns regarding grazing land and similar matters, but which have now taken on a religious component.

Another reason for the post-Jihadist era label has been an emphasis on avoiding overarching and complex strategies, at least according to Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, the leader of the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. Instead, al-Sahrawi has created several unstable zones where he encourages ethnic and community conflict. In these already-tumultuous zones, he uses Western failures and perceived transgressions as recruiting tools among those who are feeling increasingly angry and disaffected with regards to their government leaders.

The author acknowledges that military operations are sometimes necessary. However, he also describes the increasingly fractured approach

being taken by Western powers as being too heavily tilted towards attempting military solutions when other factors, such as economic development, should be playing a larger role. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“It is clear to local populations, if not to “experts” and scholars of the region, that the Sahel has surreptitiously slipped into a new era, which for lack of any other name, hints at a post-jihadist world.”***

**Source:** Bakary Sambe, “How the Sahel has slipped into a new post-Jihadist era,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 26 November 2019. <https://theconversation.com/how-the-sahel-has-slipped-into-a-new-post-jihadist-era-127538>

*It is clear to local populations, if not to “experts” and scholars of the region, that the Sahel has surreptitiously slipped into a new era, which for lack of any other name, hints at a post-jihadist world.*

*Kalashnikovs alone cannot defeat ideology nor solve the structural problems feeding the radicalisation of the young people who continue to join Boko Haram and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.*

*The G5 Sahel joint task force could have provided an alternative to a region dotted with bivouacs in French colours, or army bases topped with discreet American flags. But a lack of resources prevented it from becoming operational. This is despite numerous financial commitments that have yet to be honoured.*





## Somalia Lacks Coordinated Approach to Security

**OE Watch Commentary:** Will the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) really meet its 2021 withdrawal deadline? That question remains at the forefront of the debate regarding Somalia's future. As the accompanying excerpted policy brief from the South African *Institute for Security Studies* points out, the ability of the Somali National Army (SNA) to meet the security needs of the country after the AMISOM withdrawal is greatly in doubt. This concern exists despite the SNA undergoing years of training by foreign forces as well as receiving significant financial support from multiple donors.

The limited capacity of the SNA is not the only security hurdle facing Somalia. Implementation of the National Security Architecture, which is the framework for the establishment of an inclusive security apparatus, has not occurred due to a lack of consensus between the country's central government and its member states. This political impasse imperils the ability of the country to have a

coordinated approach to security. Unfortunately, this is not the only fragmented relationship related to security hurting the country. The article is also critical of AMISOM for the lack of coordination among its different troop contributing countries.

To be sure, despite the numerous problems associated with the SNA and AMISOM, there has been progress against al-Shabaab, with the terrorist organization having lost a significant amount of territory over the years. However, the group remains far from defeated and has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to launch devastating attacks.

Further complicating the security situation has been the rise of clan militias and other armed opposition groups. While al-Shabbab remains the primary security threat, the SNA, AMISOM, and Somali government also have to contend with these other entities.

The policy brief argues that the AMISOM withdrawal date is unrealistic, and offers suggestions as to what steps AMISOM and the Somali government should take to improve their capabilities to combat terrorism. What it does not mention in perhaps strong enough terms is the frustration many donor nations have with the situation and their determination to meet the withdrawal date. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Somalia’s envisaged transition plan, which provides for a phased, condition-based transfer of security responsibility from AMISOM to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) by 2021, is unrealistic and may not be fully realized.”***

**Source:** Jide Martyns Okeke, “Deadline or deadlock? AMISOM’s future in Somalia,” *Institute for Security Studies (South Africa)*, 9 October 2019. <https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/pb133.pdf>

*Somalia’s envisaged transition plan, which provides for a phased, condition-based transfer of security responsibility from AMISOM to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) by 2021, is unrealistic and may not be fully realized.*

*The African Union Mission in Somalia’s (AMISOM) planned transition of primary security responsibilities to Somalia’s security forces is under way. However its 2021 deadline is unrealistic. Somalia doesn’t have an enabling security environment and its army has limited capacity to sustain the transition due to Somalia’s political crisis, logistical constraints and operational gaps.*

*AMISOM is the most consistent provider of primary security in Somalia, but it is an interim force. Its political and operational reconfiguration is more likely to accelerate the conditions for an effective transition in Somalia than the focus on its withdrawal that preoccupies donor countries.*

*This policy brief argues that an interim option to sustain and improve security in Somalia is through the enhancement of AMISOM and the support of Somalia’s political process.*



*“Despite AMISOM forces such as these scheduled to completely withdraw by 2021, requiring Somalia to fend for itself, the country still lacks a coordinated approach to security.”*

Source: AMISOM Public Information/Flickr, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/au\\_unistphotostream/28874410913](https://www.flickr.com/photos/au_unistphotostream/28874410913). Public Domain





## Pending Withdrawal of Peacekeepers from DRC Causing Concern

**OE Watch Commentary:** While much attention is being paid to Somalia as AMISOM prepares to depart by 2021, on the other side of the African continent, another military force is also scheduled to leave a country which, like Somalia, suffers from violent conflict and a struggling government. An independent strategic review by the United Nations has recommended the UN complete a phased pullout of its peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by 2022. With mixed results since a small UN observer force deployed there in 1999 and which by 2019 had grown into a peacekeeping force of 20,000, there are concerns that if the withdrawal is not done correctly, the consequences for the DRC could be severe. The passage from the South African *The Conversation* discusses this pending withdrawal.



*“Withdrawal of MONUSCO troops, such as the soldier pictured here training members of the DRC army to use a drone, is controversial as many fear the country’s military will not be ready by the time of the withdrawal,”*

Source: MONUSCO/Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/monusco/49163804171/in/photostream/>. CC BY-SA 2.0

The 1999 deployment of UN personnel was to monitor the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement that was supposed to end the Second Congo War—a brutal conflict that was so costly in lives and involved so many African nations that it has been called “Africa’s World War.” The ceasefire did not hold, causing the UN to put more boots on the ground in an attempt to stop the bloodshed. In 2010, aiming to protect civilians and strengthen the government, the operation changed its name to the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO). Thanks in significant part to that mission, much of the western two thirds of the country is relatively stable today, enabling a presidential election to occur in 2018.

However, significant violence still exists in the eastern third of the country where over 100 armed groups are present. The Congolese army continues to commit human rights violations, thus alienating the general populace. Against this backdrop, there is a weak government hamstrung by people loyal to the previous president.

With so many problems, the author is concerned about increased instability if the withdrawal takes place too quickly. He also feels the UN is being overly optimistic about what can be accomplished in the three year period before the withdrawal, and is concerned about security. Therefore, the article argues for the UN to scale up operations over the next three years, rather than scale down, and calls for the withdrawal to be postponed. However, with this being the largest UN field operation, at a cost of \$1.1 billion per year, member states are looking to cut costs, not increase them. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“Given the profound weakness of the Congolese State, especially the failure to reform the security sector, this timetable is likely to become an operational straitjacket and a potential source of instability.”***

**Source:** Mats Berdal, “Is the Democratic Republic of Congo ready for peacekeepers to leave by 2022?” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 28 November 2019. <https://theconversation.com/is-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-ready-for-peacekeepers-to-leave-by-2022-127729>

*The Security Council first called for the withdrawal of the mission – or rather a transfer of responsibilities to the government and the UN country team – in 2015. Since then, every mandate renewal (every nine months) has involved calls for plans to be developed for its withdrawal. In March this year, the Security Council ordered an independent review of how exactly a phased, progressive and comprehensive exit strategy could happen. This was presented to the Council in October.*

*The argument in favour of a progressive withdrawal has long been that the Congolese government, after years of UN involvement and three presidential elections, must now assume full “national ownership” of the peace and stabilisation process.*

*The independent strategic review, now before the Security Council, recognises many of the challenges ahead. But it appears overly sanguine about what can be achieved within a three-year period. Given the profound weakness of the Congolese State, especially the failure to reform the security sector, this timetable is likely to become an operational straitjacket and a potential source of instability.*





## Senegal Navy Expands to Meet Multiple Challenges

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past few years Senegal has been ramping up the size of its naval fleet. As the passage from the South African website *DefenceWeb* notes, the country now intends to acquire three OPV 58S offshore patrol vessels from French shipbuilder Piriou. Construction of the ships will start in 2020 and take approximately 44 months to complete. Once they arrive in Senegal they will be maintained by a Senegalese subsidiary of the company.

The steel hull and aluminum superstructure patrol vessels will be 62 meters long and 9.5 meters wide. Each one can accommodate up to 48 people, including 24 crewmembers. Top speed will be 21 knots but at a speed of 12 knots the vessels will have a range of 4,500 miles. Armament will include four anti-ship missiles (Marte Mk 2Ns), the MBDA SIMBAD-RC air defense system with two Mistral 3 surface-to-air missiles, and a 76 mm gun. Two 20 mm Narwhal cannons might also be aboard though this is presently unconfirmed.

These new vessels will eventually join others that Senegal either has already received or has placed under contract to be constructed. Tasked with multiple missions, including surveillance, security, and combating drug trafficking and piracy along its 700 kilometers of coastline as well as its 159,000 square kilometers of exclusive economic zone, the Senegal navy is adding ships and firepower to meet the challenge. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**



*"Mistral missiles, similar to the ones pictured here, will be part of the air defense system on Senegal's new naval vessels,"*  
Source: MKFI/Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Commandant\\_Blaisson\\_Mistral\\_SAM\\_3.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Commandant_Blaisson_Mistral_SAM_3.JPG). Public Domain

***“Senegal has ordered three OPV 58S offshore patrol vessels from France’s Piriou, which will start construction in early 2020. The vessels will be used for surveillance, interception and security missions.”***

**Source:** “Senegal Orders Three Patrol Vessels from France,” *DefenceWeb (South Africa)*, 19 November 2019. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/featured/senegal-orders-three-patrol-vessels-from-france/>

*Senegal has ordered three OPV 58S offshore patrol vessels from France’s Piriou, which will start construction in early 2020. The vessels will be used for surveillance, interception and security missions.*

*Senegal has been expanding its navy recently, for example in 2018 signing a contract with France’s Raidco Marine for two more RPB 33 patrol boats, after the shipyard delivered a single RPB 33 in 2013. The new vessels are due to be delivered by June 2020 and will be operated on behalf of the High Authority for Maritime Security, Maritime Safety and Marine Environment (HASSMAR) by the Senegalese Navy.*

*In 2015 Senegal received the 45.8 metre long offshore patrol vessel Kedougou from STX France. This was ordered from Raidco Marine, which subcontracted construction to the STX Lorient shipyard. This was followed a year later by the 58 metre long Fouladou offshore patrol vessel, built by France’s Ocea.*





## Still No Peace for South Sudan

**OE Watch Commentary:** With nearly 400,000 dead and 10 times as many refugees, the conflict in South Sudan, now entering its fifth year, continues with no long-term resolution in sight. As the accompanying excerpted article from the South African *The Conversation* points out, eight years after gaining its independence from Sudan, the country should be full of hope, but instead finds itself gripped in an unabating and massive humanitarian crisis.

The first significant fighting between the parties began in 2013 when President Salva Kiir, who is a Dinka, accused his then-vice president, Riek Machar, who is Nuer, of plotting a coup against him. Machar was dismissed, and the followers of the two groups, split mostly along ethnic lines, engaged in a brutal, bloody civil war. A peace agreement was signed in September 2018, but its implementation was delayed. Finally, they decided on 12 November 2019 as the day to implement the agreement, which included the formation of a transitional government of national unity, but that day came and went, and a 100-day delay was agreed upon before the new government would have to be formed.

Perhaps the most difficult part of forming the unity government is forming the unity military. There was some initial progress towards that objective, with Machar's opposition troops moving towards the cantonment sites. However, they have since abandoned several of these without receiving training. Unfortunately, without a unified military it is feared that the formation of the transitional government could be in jeopardy.

The 100 days is not up yet, and it is possible the opposition troops could return to the cantonment sites. Complicating the entire situation is the fact that the country does not have sufficient funds for the necessary disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration.

There are other issues thwarting the peace process, including questions on the boundaries of states, fragmented militias, and corrupt elites. With so many obstacles, the author suggests the UN or African Union (AU) establish a transitional authority to temporarily govern the country. This has been done before, in Cambodia by the UN in 1992. Now, nearly three decades later another country is struggling to govern itself, and might need outside help, though such an approach would be extremely controversial. **End OE Watch Commentary (Feldman)**

***“South Sudan’s biggest problem is the demands of elites within the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army. Every attempt for peace has been scuttled by a corrupt leadership.”***

**Source:** Andrew Thchie, “Why South Sudan’s attempts at peace continue to fail,” *The Conversation (South Africa)*, 17 November 2019. <https://theconversation.com/why-south-sudans-attempts-at-peace-continue-to-fail-126846>

*As the deadline drew closer, sticking points like the integration of a trained unified army, general security and the demarcation of borders between States proved difficult to resolve. Machar and Secretary General of South Sudan’s Opposition Alliance Lam Akol called for the formation of the government to be delayed over fears that full-scale conflict could occur.*

*Now might be the time for South Sudan to consider an external custodian government to build institutions and reform security mechanisms. This has happened before in warring Cambodia when the United Nations established a transitional authority in 1992, leading to a comprehensive political settlement.*

*But South Sudan’s biggest problem is the demands of elites within the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army. Every attempt for peace has been scuttled by a corrupt leadership. This has led to more violence and increased fragmentation among their supporters.*



*“Implementation of a peace deal between South Sudan’s government and rebels has been delayed, meaning the fighting between them will continue. Pictured here are government soldiers.”*

Source: VOA via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016%E2%80%9319\\_Wau\\_clashes#/media/File:SPLA\\_soldiers\\_near\\_Juba\\_\(April\\_2016\)\\_1.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2016%E2%80%9319_Wau_clashes#/media/File:SPLA_soldiers_near_Juba_(April_2016)_1.jpg). Public Domain



## Mali President's Honor of French Soldiers Killed Risks Backlash at Home

**OE Watch Commentary:** On 25 November, 13 French soldiers from four different regiments involved in a military operation against jihadists in Liptako Gourma in northern Mali were killed when their two helicopters collided in the early stages of the operation. It was a devastating blow to French-led Operation Barkane. Both Malian and French press pointed out that it was the deadliest military episode since 58 French soldiers were killed in the 1983 bombing in Lebanon.

On 2 December, French President Macron and two former French presidents were in attendance for the ceremony in Paris honoring the dead and their sacrifice. President Macron's eulogy firmly positioned France's role in Mali, saying "They died for all of us. They died in operation, for France, for the protection of the peoples of the Sahel, for the security of their compatriots and for the freedom of the world."



French Tiger Attack Helicopter.

Source: JO2 Pete Hatzakos via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurocopter\\_Tiger\\_HAC\\_DN-ST-92-01620.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurocopter_Tiger_HAC_DN-ST-92-01620.jpg), Public domain

Malian president Ibrahim Boubacar Kéita was also in attendance at the memorial, along with a large delegation including both the Muslim and Christian leaders of Mali. President Kéita, known as IBK, had to be there. It has been no secret that Malians are frustrated at the lack of progress against jihadists in northern and central Mali. There has been an upswell of anti-French demonstrations and anti-French press coverage in recent months. Malian press has documented mistrust amongst Malians about the French role in Mali. However, IBK needs France and by being in Paris, honoring the dead French soldiers, IBK demonstrated his country's commitment to the French force operating in Mali.

However, according to some Malian press sources, his public show of grief for the French on the world stage might backfire at home. Malian commentators were quick to point out that IBK, while rightfully acknowledging the ultimate sacrifice made by these French soldiers, has not given the same attention to the thousands of Malian soldiers killed in the conflict engulfing north and central Mali. As the first accompanying passage demonstrates, the Malian government has stated that it simply does not have the resources to pay the same reverence to the many Mali soldiers killed.

Ultimately both French and Malian leaders have to justify the cost of the war, in both blood and treasure, to their constituents. The French have had hundreds of years to develop its solemn traditions. Malian leaders, for the sake of the state they are trying to preserve, may have to answer the media's call and develop their own. **End OE Watch Commentary (Billingsley)**

***“Malian soldiers are massacred every day like insects without the Malian government often deigning to make the slightest press release to inform public opinion, let alone pay homage worthy of the name, to the fallen soldiers...”***





## Continued: Mali President's Honor of French Soldiers Killed Risks Backlash at Home

**Source:** “Hommage exemplaire de Macron aux 13 soldats français tués au Mali : Une cérémonie qui devrait servir de leçon à IBK! (Macron’s exemplary tribute to the 13 French soldiers killed in Mali: A ceremony which should serve as a lesson for IBK!),” *Malijet.co*, 11 December 2019. <https://malijet.co/crise-malienne/hommage-exemplaire-de-macron-aux-13-soldats-francais-tues-au-mali-une-ceremonie-qui-devrait-servir-de-lecon-a-ibk>

*“Malian soldiers are massacred every day like insects without the Malian government often deigning to make the slightest press release to inform public opinion, let alone pay homage worthy of the name, to the fallen soldiers... President IBK, Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces, generally even gives the impression of not having time to bury these brave sons who died for the nation with dignity. He very often prefers to travel to other destinations on the globe... His presence at the meditation ceremony in Paris, on behalf of the 13 French soldiers who died in Mali, and for which IBK obviously took the pleasure of flying, should serve him well as a lesson in terms of respect due to the memory of a soldier who died for the fatherland.”*

**Source:** “Hommage national aux treize militaires français morts au Mali : Les larmes muettes d’IBK (National tribute to the thirteen French soldiers who died in Mali: IBK’s silent tears),” *Malijet.co*, 05 December 2019. [https://malijet.com/la\\_societe\\_malienne\\_aujourd'hui/actualite\\_de\\_la\\_nation\\_malienne/236597-hommage-national-aux-treize-militaires-francais-morts-au-mali-le.html](https://malijet.com/la_societe_malienne_aujourd'hui/actualite_de_la_nation_malienne/236597-hommage-national-aux-treize-militaires-francais-morts-au-mali-le.html)

*“The sobriety of this ceremony contrasts with the media shock and especially gossip distilled on social networks in Mali.”*



French Cougar Assault and Maneuver helicopter.

Source: Biser Todorov via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AS532\\_Cougar.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AS532_Cougar.jpg), CC BY 4.0





## ISIS Presence (or Absence) in Sudan



*Sudanese protestors celebrate signing of political agreement.*

Source: VOA via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sudanese\\_protestors\\_celebrate\\_signing\\_of\\_political\\_agreement.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sudanese_protestors_celebrate_signing_of_political_agreement.png), Public domain

Chadians in Boko Haram, whose leaders have pledged loyalty to ISIS, while six others were Egyptians and one was Tunisian. The nationalities of other deportees were not mentioned.

The article also highlights Sudan's current political context. The country has declared a national emergency as a result of political unrest. However, according to the article, recent political developments have been positive. In addition, the article notes the Minister of Religious Affairs believes extremist religious discourses are being combatted effectively. This involves adjusting school curricula and preventing Islamist elements from exploiting mosques to promote their ideas. In particular, the Minister noted the Muslim Brotherhood is no longer active in political or civic life, although he did not explicitly refer to it as an extremist organization. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“There is no ISIS organization in Sudan but there are individuals, I don’t know how many they are.”***

**Source:** “Religious affairs minister denies ISIS presence in Sudan,” *Sudan Tribune*, 3 November 2019. <http://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article68435>

*Sudan’s Minister of Religious Affairs, Nasr al-Din Mufreh, has denied the existence of Islamic State (ISIS) organization in Sudan but acknowledged the existence of a large group of extremists produced by the former regime. “There is no ISIS organization in Sudan but there are individuals, I don’t know how many they are,” he stressed. Al-Tayyar newspaper on Sunday said that the Sudanese government is preparing to hand over between 16 and 20 terrorist elements from ISIS and other groups to their countries. The local daily further said that the arrested persons belonged to different nationalities, including six Egyptians, one Tunisian, and six Boko Haram members from Chad and Nigeria.*

*The Sudanese Minister of Religious Affairs affirmed that there is a religious discourse from which extremism arises and that his country will face all attempts to undermine the freedoms in Sudan. Mufreh pointed to his ministry’s interest in combating extremism, takfiri ideas and terrorism, as well as modifying the curricula to prepare students to be useful for the society. He revealed that some isolated Islamist elements are trying to exploit mosques to promote their ideas, but vowed to disseminate “serious speech in the mosques to call for moderation and the fight against extremism.” He added that the project of the Muslim Brotherhood in Sudan was defeated in political and community life.*





## ISIS Encroaching on Tanzania



Ruvuma River basin map.

Source: Keenan Pepper via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruvuma\\_River\\_basin\\_map.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ruvuma_River_basin_map.svg) CC BY 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** In March 2019, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) claimed the formation of a new “Central Africa Province,” with cells in eastern Congo and northern Mozambique. The cells in northern Mozambique have become increasingly active in recent months. The excerpted Spanish-language article in *Prensa Latina* discusses an attack that occurred on the Tanzanian side of the Ruvuma River, which forms the border with Mozambique. This was the first time an attack killed Tanzanians as opposed to Mozambicans. According to the article, that area was not known for terrorist activity, so the deaths of six Tanzanians and seven others who were injured came as a shock.

The article claims Mozambicans likely carried out the attack, though it does not mention any specific group. It notes that in the last two years, terrorists have carried out

numerous attacks in Cabo Delgado, which is in northern Mozambique and where the “Central African Province” operates. In these two years, 300 people have been killed and thousands have been displaced.

There have not been any arrests since the recent attack, but the police and other security agencies have vowed to pursue the attackers. The article also notes that, at the start of the upsurge in terrorist activity in 2017, Tanzania’s president alleged that the terrorists were religiously motivated. Further terrorist attacks in Tanzania or against Tanzanians, especially by the “Central African Province” of ISIS would indicate an expansion of terrorism and insecurity in East Africa. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“For almost two years, terrorists have carried out numerous attacks in the province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique on the border with Tanzania, with an estimate of at least 300 civilians killed and tens of thousands of displaced people.”***

**Source:** “Seis Tanzanos Asesinados en Frontera con Mozambique (Six Tanzanians Assassinated on the Border with Mozambique),” *Prensa Latina*, 13 November 2019. <https://www.prensa-latina.cu/index.php?o=rn&id=320684&SEO=seis-tanzanos-asesinados-en-frontera-con-mozambique>

Six Tanzanians were shot dead and seven others were injured in an attack carried out by unidentified attackers in a village bordering a region of Mozambique, a police official said today. The chief of criminal investigations of the Tanzanian police, Robert Boaz, explained that the incident occurred in an area known for terrorist activity. The attackers, presumably from Mozambique, gathered the villagers before opening fire.

“The police and other security bodies will do everything possible to ensure that everyone involved is arrested and brought to justice. No drop of blood from Tanzania can be spilled with impunity,” Boaz said. For almost two years, terrorists have carried out numerous attacks in the province of Cabo Delgado, Mozambique on the border with Tanzania, with... at least 300 civilians killed and tens of thousands of displaced people. The motive... remains unknown, but Tanzanian President John Magufuli suggested in June 2017 that they [were] religious in nature.





## Côte d'Ivoire Defends Borders from Terrorist Threats



Korhogo.

Source: Joker-x via Wikimedia, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Korhogo.jpg> CC BY 3.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Côte d'Ivoire is taking measures to secure its borders amid escalating attacks by jihadists in neighboring Burkina Faso and related counter-terrorism operations. The excerpted French-language article in *Le Monde* notes that authorities in Côte d'Ivoire are concerned that jihadists fleeing from counter-terrorism operations in Burkina Faso will move into Ivorian territory. As a result, Ivorian soldiers in the northern city of Korhogo are being deployed to the border and strengthening their positions.

The article points out that Côte d'Ivoire has 1,116 kilometers (~700 miles) of land borders with two of the most volatile countries in West Africa: Mali and Burkina Faso.

According to the article, the turning point in Côte d'Ivoire's threat assessments came in July 2019 after the assassination of a tour

guide and the kidnapping of two French tourists in Benin, although the latter two were eventually rescued. This signaled to Côte d'Ivoire that jihadist groups could also venture into its territory since they would not limiting themselves to Mali and Burkina Faso.

The article also quotes an Ivorian official who observes that even with 300 experienced soldiers guarding the country's borders, the dry season poses a challenge because receding rivers make it much easier for terrorists and criminals to infiltrate Ivorian territory. Furthermore, many Ivorian and Burkinabe citizens have cultural, trade, or kinship ties on the other side of the border, so there is an inevitable flow of people across the border that cannot be easily monitored or contained. There have also been isolated cases where armed men from Burkina Faso were reported to have entered Côte d'Ivoire, but villagers chased them away. The article claims that Ivorians in the country's border areas and in its intelligence apparatus have significant roles to play when it comes to cooperating with Ivorian soldiers stationed at the border to prevent any terrorist infiltration into the country, like what happened in Benin earlier in 2019. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“In recent months, the Ivorian army has focused on Côte d'Ivoire's 1,116 km border with the two most volatile countries in the sub-region, Mali and Burkina Faso.”***

**Source:** “Opération ‘Frontière étanche’: comment la Côte d'Ivoire se protège de la contagion terroriste (Operation ‘Tight Border’: how Côte d'Ivoire protects itself from terrorist contagion),” *Le Monde*, 12 November 2019. [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/12/operation-frontiere-etanche-comment-la-cote-d-ivoire-se-protege-de-la-contagion-terroriste\\_6018904\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/11/12/operation-frontiere-etanche-comment-la-cote-d-ivoire-se-protege-de-la-contagion-terroriste_6018904_3212.html)

*In the Burkina Faso forest of Dida on the Ivorian border, a sweeping operation has been underway since the beginning of October and following an aerial military bombardment targeting potential jihadists. “The Burkinabés fired on suspects,” explained a commander. “We do not want that when they escape, they come to take refuge on Ivorian territory.”*

*In recent months, the Ivorian army has focused on Côte d'Ivoire's 1,116 km border with the two most volatile countries in the sub-region, Mali and Burkina Faso. To apprehend infiltrators, it launched the operation “Tight Border” in July after the assassination of a tour guide and the kidnapping of two French tourists in Pendjari Park, Benin.*

*Today, in addition to customs officers and the police, at least 300 veteran soldiers daily monitor the border drawn mostly by natural features. But, as the commander remarks, “in the dry season, rivers and rivers recede and infiltration into Côte d'Ivoire territory becomes easier.” “Some people have their kin on the other side, and village festivals are common, and trips for trade or fishing occur daily, not to mention that some families here own plantations on the other side of the border.*

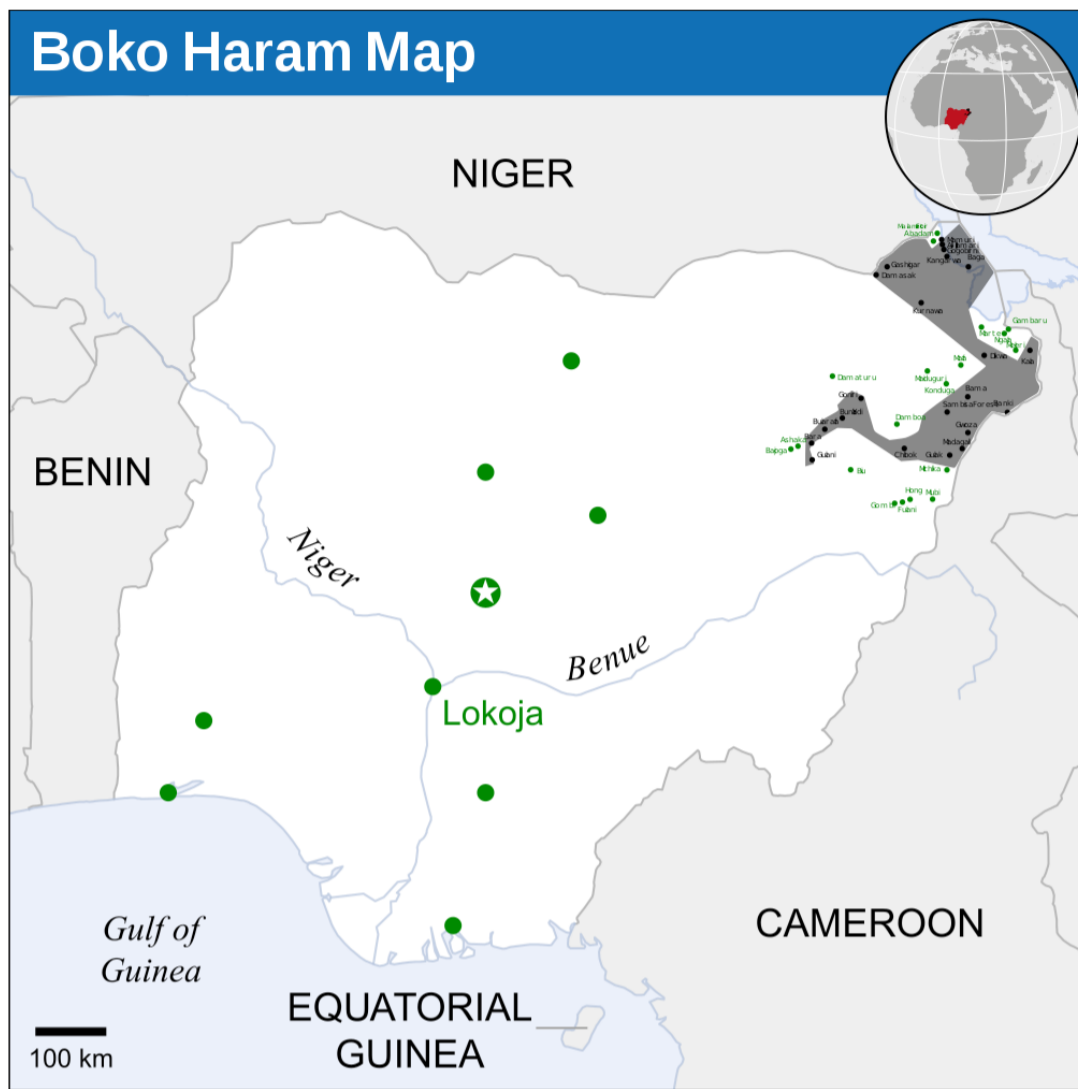
*A few months ago, two armed and hooded men managed to cross the border and approach the villages. Deterred by farmers, they have returned back to Burkina Faso. “It was not nothing, they had Kalashnikovs, and threatened peasants,” said a representative of the government. Since this warning, these incursions have been taken more seriously and the military presence has been strengthened.*

*But the military repeats, “we will never be able to control everything.” Their fear remains that some terrorists hide among the local population. The real challenge for the soldiers is to improve their intelligence network in order to receive details of abnormal activities or behavior back to the village chief as quickly as possible.*





## Boko Haram Engages in Rare Hostage Release



Islamist insurgency in Nigeria.

Source: 험방이 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islamist\\_insurgency\\_in\\_Nigeria.svg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Islamist_insurgency_in_Nigeria.svg) CC BY 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** While the Nigerian military faces a military challenge from Boko Haram, the Nigerian government faces the challenge of negotiating with the group. For example, there have not been any extended ceasefires concluded with the group, despite certain instances where the group accepted negotiated deals for the release of hostages. The most prominent of such deals was when Boko Haram exchanged over 100 of the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls in return for a reported ransom and imprisoned group members in late 2016 and early 2017.

The excerpted 12 November article from *Sahara Reporters* discusses another recent hostage exchange that the Nigerian government concluded with Boko Haram through intermediaries. Although much less prominent than the Chibok exchange, the hostages' statements after being freed revealed some details on what life is like in Boko Haram custody and in its camps. One of the released hostages was a Christian pastor, who was held by the group for seven months after being kidnapped alongside a National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) volunteer. The article notes the government's intermediaries were the Kalthum Foundation for Peace and Initiative for Peace Building, which indicates how non-governmental organizations are able to liaise with Boko Haram in a way the government cannot.

Once in custody, the pastor claims Boko Haram attempted to convert him to Islam, but they did not harm him when he refused. The pastor said he pretended not to know what the Boko Haram members were saying, which may have helped the situation. This incident demonstrates the possibilities of negotiations with Boko Haram, although it is not clear whether the group received any ransom or concession from the government. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“The two [hostages] were released [by Boko Haram] after interventions by the state government and two non-governmental organizations, the Kalthum Foundation for Peace and Initiative for Peace Building.”***

**Source:** “Boko Haram Tried to Convert Me, Says Winners Pastor Held Hostage For 7 Months,” *Sahara Reporters*, 12 November 2019. <http://saharareporters.com/2019/11/12/boko-haram-trying-to-convert-me-says-winners-pastor-held-hostage-7-months>

*Moses Oyeleke, a pastor with the Living Faith Church Worldwide, known as Winners' Chapel, has regained freedom seven months after he was kidnapped by the Boko Haram insurgents. Oyeleke is a pastor in Maiduguri, Borno state, where he was kidnapped, alongside a National Youth Corps (NYSC) member last March. The two were released after interventions by the state government and two non-governmental organizations, the Kalthum Foundation for Peace and Initiative for Peace Building. Speaking on his release, Oyeleke said they were taken to Sambisa after they were kidnapped on Chibok road in March. “I stayed peacefully with them for up to seven months. Many times they have requested me to convert to Islam, their preachers had preached to me a lot of times but you know when you have wisdom, you relate with people in a way that would not lead to a quarrel. “When they came to preach, I paid attention to everything they said and when they asked me questions about things that I knew would cause problems if I had responded, I always told them I didn't know so that I wouldn't say things that would offend them.”*



## Traditional Islamic Leaders Under Threat in Niger



*Welcome to Tillaberi!*

Source: ACEI Cheung via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Welcome\\_to\\_Tillaberi\\_\(3581873082\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Welcome_to_Tillaberi_(3581873082).jpg) CC BY 2.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** In most Sahelian countries, traditional chiefs hold power and influence over village populations. They are also often loyal to the state and provide a form of rural governance. As a result, they have become impediments to jihadists' desire to destabilize governments and establish religious rule based on the jihadists' interpretation of Islam. This is also the case in Niger. The accompanying passage from the French-language article in *Niamey et Les 2 Jours* discusses a recent instance when a village chief in Tillaberi, Niger, was assassinated near the Malian border. The article notes this was hardly exceptional given that militants have previously assassinated other chiefs, including a popular Tuareg tribal chief in July.

According to the article, armed groups believe traditional chiefs are state agents who collaborate with Niger's defense forces to hunt them down. The article also indicates that terrorists who kill traditional chiefs not only want to silence them, but also deter

others who might seek to denounce the jihadists. While the article does not attribute the recent assassinations to any particular group, it does mention that such assassinations are most common in the Mali-Burkina Faso border region, indicating that jihadist groups related to al-Qaeda-loyal Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) or Islamic State-loyal Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) are involved. Both groups harbor anti-state ideologies and operate in that region. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

***“This assassination extends the list of traditional leaders who have been victims of armed groups in the border region of Mali and Burkina Faso in recent years.”***

**Source:** “Un chef traditionnel enlevé puis tué par des hommes armés dans la région de Tillabéri (Traditional Leader Kidnapped and Killed by Gunmen in the Tillaberi region),” *Niamey et Les 2 Jours*, 13 November 2019. <https://www.niameyetles2jours.com/la-gestion-publique/securite/1311-4708-un-chef-traditionnel-enleve-puis-tue-par-des-hommes-armes-dans-la-region-de-tillaberi>

*Abducted by armed men on November 11, 2019, Ali Mainassara, the village chief of Boni in the Tillaberi region, was found dead on November 12, reported Niger news, citing local sources. The circumstances of the murder remain unspecified. This assassination extends the list of traditional leaders who have been victims of armed groups in the border region of Mali and Burkina Faso in recent years.*

*Last July, it was Almoubacher Ag Alamjadi, head of a Tuareg tribe, who was murdered. These traditional leaders are accused by the armed groups of being agents of the state who collaborate with the Nigerien defense forces to hunt them down. According to some observers, these repeated killings mean terrorists simply want to discourage people who plan to denounce them to the state.*





# Latin America Emerges as a Russian Theater of Operations

by Stephen Blank

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For the full article, see: <http://jamestown.org/program/latin-america-emerges-as-a-russian-theater-of-operations/>

**OE Watch Commentary:** Russia is playing a big role in Latin America to destabilize Washington's alliance system and threaten US interests. Despite the costs involved in sustaining Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, Russia's three main "proxies" in Latin America, President Vladimir Putin—like his Soviet predecessors—seems willing to bear those expenditures. The benefits to Moscow come in other forms. For instance, while Moscow has stepped away from pressing Caracas to pay its debts, Russian state-owned oil giant Rosneft has been granted ever greater access to Venezuela's oil and natural gas sector. In exchange for a debt write-off, Venezuelan state-run oil firm Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) reportedly could be handed over entirely to Rosneft. In addition, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has characterized Venezuela—as well as Cuba and Latin America more generally—as poster children of sorts for his regular fulminations against Washington's supposed efforts to destabilize the global order. Moreover, there is ample evidence of Moscow at least exploring the idea, if not yet openly intending, to establish a naval and/or air base in Venezuela, on the island of La Orchila. In late 2018, Venezuela announced that Russia is obtaining a long-term base on the island of La Orchila that had been offered to Moscow a decade earlier by Hugo Chavez. The island is some 160 miles from Caracas and is home to a Venezuelan airfield and navy base.

In this context, statements last March by Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu that the Russian Armed Forces are now capable of remote combat missions around the world take on a more sinister potential. And subsequent developments only underscore this point.

Specifically, on August 15, the Russian and Venezuelan defense ministers signed an agreement allowing for mutual warship visits. Days later, military expert Vladimir Bogatyrev told *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* that Russian frigates and submarines had all fired Kalibr cruise missiles at "terrorists" in Syria from a distance of over 200 kilometers and pointedly indicated that these ships could perform such missions not only in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans but also in the Caribbean Sea. Moreover, Bogatyrev reiterated what has become a standard argument of the Russian government since the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) arms control regime collapsed due to Moscow's violations of this 1987 treaty. Namely, according to Bogatyrev, "Russia has legal grounds, in response to the emergence of new weapons from the US after leaving the INF Treaty, to deploy its submarines and ships with medium- and shorter-range missiles in relative proximity to US borders." He also extolled Venezuela's seaports, where Russian ships and submarines can "regularly enter, replenish supplies, and then perform combat missions off the coast of North America."

Furthermore, in July, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro that the Russian troops who were previously sent to Venezuela had fulfilled their mission and that Moscow was, therefore, ready to send more troops on new missions. Meanwhile, it also appears that Rosneft has brought Russian paramilitary forces to Venezuela to protect its offices, personnel and installations. Apparently, they may also be there to protect the Maduro government against popular unrest.

Moscow's military ambitions in Latin America do not end there: Maduro, as many Western analysts and Latin American governments recognize, has been stirring up trouble with the governments of Ecuador and Colombia, just as his predecessor Hugo Chavez did with Moscow's assistance a decade ago. Russia has also established a meaningful military presence in Nicaragua, which has notably signed a naval agreement with Russia to provide port access and permission to operate part of Russia's global satellite system (GLONASS) from its territory. Taken together, these steps appear to form at least the rudiments of a network to monitor all US naval operations in the Caribbean and South Atlantic, which would then be under threat from military bases in Venezuela and potentially Nicaragua.

Russia is now intensifying its investments in Cuba and Venezuela, as illustrated by Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's recent tour of these two Latin American countries. Medvedev denounced in typical fashion, as did Lavrov in his simultaneous speech, US "meddling" in Latin America. At the same time, Deputy Defense Minister Yuri Borisov was meeting with Maduro in Venezuela. For his part, the embattled Venezuelan leader had just returned from Moscow, where he sought more economic relief. Cuba, too, will receive Russian assistance to "kick-start" its oil and gas development and to build nuclear power plants.

Thus, it is clear that Russia is in Latin America to stay and is expanding its portfolio of instruments of power—not least trying to secure the ability to threaten the US from inside the Western Hemisphere. Latin America is now becoming a real, rather than notional, theater of potential military operations for Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Blank)**



## Bolivia and Kremlin Broadcasting

**OE Watch Commentary:** Over the past decade, the Kremlin has worked diligently to expand its information reach into Spanish-speaking countries, particularly within Latin America. According to the Kremlin-funded *RT* website, this broadcasting station now reaches 18 million people weekly across 10 countries in the Latin American region. While claiming to be an alternative source of information, *RT*'s perspective closely aligns with that of the Kremlin. After the recent change of political power in Bolivia, the new Bolivian authorities challenged *RT*'s perspective. The three brief accompanying excerpts from pro-Kremlin, Russian media sources describe how the Kremlin is using media to shape the narrative in Bolivia.

The first excerpt from the pro-Kremlin news source *Izvestia*, quotes the “Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova,” who “announced that Moscow was concerned about the cessation of broadcasting of the Russian television channel *RT* in Bolivia.” The new government in Bolivia elected to block *RT* within the country after it continued to claim that former President Morales was removed in an illegal coup. Zakharova goes on to suggest that this action might be “an attempt to ‘drown out’ alternative sources of information,” and that Russia could “be forced to regard these actions as non-compliance with international obligations to ensure free access to information and freedom of expression.”

The second excerpt from *RT-Spanish*, indicates that the Kremlin is sticking to its narrative regarding the recent political change in Bolivia. The article quotes the Mexican president who insists that former president “Evo Morales ‘was the victim of a coup d’etat’ last November.” This assertion aligns with the Kremlin belief that any popular resistance to authoritarian rule is likely the result of western meddling. Finally, the third excerpt from the pro-Kremlin *Sputnik* news source quotes the *RT* editor-in-chief who has offered former president “Morales his own show at the broadcaster’s Spanish-language channel.”

By offering free and highly professional news programming throughout Latin America, the Kremlin has been able to propagate its narrative as to how the world operates. While *RT* has been temporarily removed from the Bolivian airwaves, indications suggest that this suspension will do little to change the Kremlin’s perspective and how they broadcast it throughout Latin America. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**



Vladimir Putin held talks at the Kremlin with President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia Evo Morales, 11 July 2019.

Source: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/60980> CCA 4.0 Intl

**“...Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova announced that Moscow was concerned about the cessation of broadcasting of the Russian television channel *RT* in Bolivia...”**

**Source:** “Боливия заявила о стремлении к дружеским отношениям с Москвой,” [Bolivia declared its desire for friendly relations with Moscow] *Izvestia*, 28 November 2019. <https://iz.ru/948499/2019-11-28/boliviia-zaiavila-o-stremlenii-k-druzheskim-otnosheniim-s-moskvoi>

...Earlier on November 28, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova announced that Moscow was concerned about the cessation of broadcasting of the Russian television channel *RT* in Bolivia. According to her, the situation is especially alarming because broadcasting in this state stopped right after the broadcast stopped in neighboring Ecuador. The diplomat expressed hope that what is happening is not an attempt to “drown out” alternative sources of information by discriminating against one of them. Zakharova emphasized that otherwise Russia would be forced to regard these actions as non-compliance with international obligations to ensure free access to information and freedom of expression.

**Source:** “López Obrador: ‘Evo Morales fue víctima de un golpe de Estado,’” [López Obrador: ‘Evo Morales was the victim of a coup d’etat’] *RT-Spanish*, 1 December 2019. <https://actualidad.rt.com/actualidad/335449-obrador-morales-victima-golpe-estado>

The president of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, says that Evo Morales “was the victim of a coup d’etat” last November, as he declared this Sunday at the Plaza Zocalo in Mexico City on the occasion of the first anniversary of his coming to power.

**Source:** “RT Editor-in-Chief Simonyan Offers Bolivian Ex-President Morales Job as TV Host,” *Sputnik*, 11 November 2019. <https://sputniknews.com/amp/world/20191111077277178-rt-editor-in-chief-simonyan-offers-bolivian-ex-president-morales-job-as-tv-host/>

Evo Morales, who recently resigned as president of Bolivia, may not be unemployed for long, *Sputnik* and *RT* editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan said on Monday, offering Morales his own show at the broadcaster’s Spanish-language channel, citing previous experience with another former South American president-turned-TV presenter.





## Increased Russian Soft Power in Cuba

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Russian media continue to stress their country's growing relations with Cuba. As reported last month (see "Warmer Russian-Cuban Relations," *OE Watch*, December 2019) senior Russian officials continue to visit Cuba and talk of greater cooperation. The first excerpt from the popular weekly *Argumenty i Fakty*, describes the recent trip of Valentina Matvienko, the Speaker of the Federation Council, along with "the heads of the key committees of the upper house" to Havana in mid-November.

Besides reviewing the increased Russian investment in Cuban infrastructure projects (e.g. development of railways), debt relief, and the growing amount of trade between the two countries (\$400 million in 2018), the article examines other recent Russian "soft-power" incentives. For instance, in 2018, when the Kremlin learned that the Cuban National Capitol was in need of repair, Russian leaders "sent the best restorers to restore the gold coating of the dome... worth several hundred million rubles" as a gift. Similarly, to increase Russian language fluency among the Cubans, this year "the Russian government has allocated quotas for the study of 100 Cuban students in Russian universities," as well as opening a center for "Russian language teaching... at the University of Havana." The article also mentions growing Russian tourism in Cuba, where there is now "a direct flight [from Moscow] to Holguin, a popular resort famous for its white sand beaches."



1960s Cuba-Soviet friendship poster with Fidel Castro and Nikita Khrushchev.  
Source: Keizers via Wikimedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet\\_Union#/media/File:Cuba-Russia\\_friendship\\_poster.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union#/media/File:Cuba-Russia_friendship_poster.jpg) CC BY-SA 3.0

The second excerpt from the main government newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, provides a detailed interview with the Russian Ambassador to Cuba who asserts that "Havana is our most important strategic partner and ally in Latin America and the Caribbean..." The third excerpt from the pro-Western source *Ukrainian Weekly*, suggests that Russia's efforts in restoring closer ties with Cuba are already paying off. As the article notes, Cuba joined 18 other pro-Russian countries in voting against a recent UN resolution "urging the Russian Federation, as the occupying power, to withdraw its military forces from Crimea and to end its temporary occupation of Ukrainian territory without delay." While the Kremlin has yet to reposition any military assets in Cuba, it has been strengthening its soft power influence via diplomatic, information and economic ties with this island nation. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**“...Havana is our most important strategic partner and ally in Latin America and the Caribbean....”**

**Source:** Vitaly Tseplyaev, "Золото для амиго. Как Валентина Матвиенко призналась Кубе в любви (Gold for amigo. How Valentina Matvienko declared love for Cuba)," *Argumenty i Fakty*, 18 November 2019. [https://aif.ru/politics/world/zoloto\\_dlya\\_amigo\\_kak\\_valentina\\_matvienko\\_priznalas\\_kube\\_v\\_lyubvi](https://aif.ru/politics/world/zoloto_dlya_amigo_kak_valentina_matvienko_priznalas_kube_v_lyubvi)

...“Could you, Russians, give us a dome?” It was about the dome of the National Capitol, one of the main attractions of the capital and a special item the pride of the Cubans.... So, the Russians heard the offer. They sent the best restorers to restore the gold coating of the dome.... Work worth several hundred million rubles was a gift to Russia Havana on the occasion of its 500th anniversary.

In the current academic year, the Russian government has allocated quotas for the study of 100 Cuban students in Russian universities. In the future, they should become even more. In Cuba, Russian language teaching is being revived gradually - a special center has been opened at the University of Havana, Russian lessons have been introduced in a couple of metropolitan schools.

But these are still trifles. The main calculation of the Cubans is to help Moscow in solving their economic problems. Back in 2012, the governments of the two countries signed a cooperation program. A year later, Russia wrote off Havana 90% of the 35 billion debt accumulated since the days of the USSR (the Cubans could not have returned such a monstrous amount if they wanted to). And in 2016, she proposed the remaining 3.5 billion to be invested in investment projects in Cuba. First of all, Russians are interested in energy, metallurgy. They are ready to invest in the development of railways - which, according to Matvienko, will allow renewing the rolling stock, doubling the speed of movement....

...Therefore, Cubans are counting on vacationers from Russia. They even arranged a direct flight to Holguin, a popular resort famous for its white sand beaches.

**Source:** Sergey Novikov, "Куба близко (Cuba is close)," *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 27 November 2019. <https://rg.ru/2019/11/27/posol-rf-rasskazal-chem-vygodno-ekonomicheskoe-prisutstvie-na-kube.html>

...What is the reason for such a dynamic development of bilateral contacts?

Andrei Guskov: The high intensity and richness of the Russian-Cuban dialogue is due to a number of factors, both bilateral and international. Havana is our most important strategic partner and ally in Latin America and the Caribbean....

**Source:** "U.N. General Assembly calls on Russia to withdraw military forces from Crimea," *Ukrainian Weekly*, 13 December 2019. <http://www.ukrweekly.com/uwwp/u-n-general-assembly-calls-on-russia-to-withdraw-military-forces-from-crimea/>

...“The U.N. General Assembly has adopted a draft resolution urging the Russian Federation, as the occupying power, to withdraw its military forces from Crimea and to end its temporary occupation of Ukrainian territory without delay,” the Ukrainian Mission to the United Nations said on Facebook. The resolution calls upon all member states to cooperate with the United Nations “to encourage and support efforts to put an end to the Russian occupation of Crimea as rapidly as possible and to refrain from any dealings with the Russian Federation regarding Crimea that are inconsistent with this aim.”...

...Nineteen countries voted against: Armenia, Belarus, Burundi, Cambodia, China, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Philippines, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe....



## Russia and Venezuela Continue Strong Diplomatic Relations

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss diplomatic relations between Russia and Venezuela, including new agreements between the two countries. They also provide Latin American perspectives on US actions in Venezuela.

According to Venezuelan news source *Telesurtv*, Venezuela and Russia “have maintained stable diplomatic and military cooperation since 1999.” Given their long-standing relationship, Russia did not hesitate to vow its support to Venezuela when “the US began initiating sanctions in January 2019.” The passage notes that the two countries intend to “stop the hegemonic position they believe the United States currently maintains.”

In early October 2019, Russia reiterated its support to Venezuela as reported by Venezuelan news source *Vio Noticias*. This support consisted of new agreements including plans that would possibly bolster the Venezuelan economy and increase bilateral trade by at least 10 percent.

At present, Venezuela and Russia have 264 agreements, 20 of which are considered strategic. According to the Venezuelan news source *HispanTV*, Russia has also vowed to maintain a military presence in Venezuela. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Vladimir Putin and Nicolas Maduro, 25 October 2019.

Source: Kremlin.ru via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir\\_Putin\\_and\\_Nicol%C3%A1s\\_Maduro\\_\(2019-10-25\)\\_01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Vladimir_Putin_and_Nicol%C3%A1s_Maduro_(2019-10-25)_01.jpg), CC-BY-4.0

***“It seems that the United States cannot accept that some Latin American countries are capable of defending themselves independently or conducting internal and external political affairs despite the pressure imposed by sanctions.”***

***- Maria Zakharova, spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry***

**Source:** “Rusia y Venezuela aliados que buscan frenar hegemonía de EE.UU (Russia and Venezuela as Allies to Halt United States Hegemony),” *Telesurtv*, 28 September 2019. <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/rusia-venezuela-relacion-bilateral-geopolitica-hegemonia-eeuu-20190924-0015.html>

*Russia and Venezuela have maintained close diplomatic ties since 1999 after the two countries began working together with Hugo Chavez on issues to include energy, geo-political issues, diplomatic relationships and military cooperation. However, since the United States began initiating sanctions in January 2019, Russia immediately vowed its support to Venezuela and even accused the United States of attempting to further destabilize the South American country. The two countries have also discussed their intentions to stop the hegemonic position they believe the United States currently maintains.*

**Source:** “Rusia y Venezuela firman nuevos acuerdos; renuevan asesorías (Russia and Venezuela Sign New Agreements),” *Vio Noticias*, 6 October 2019. <https://www.voanoticias.com/a/rusia-venezuela-nuevos-acuerdos-renuevan-asesorias/5112378.html>

*In early October 2019, Russian reiterated its support to Nicolas Maduro and signed multiple new agreements with Venezuela. As part of the agreements, both countries are looking to implement new ideas to bolster the economy and transfer technology. As for the economy, there is hope that imports/exports by both nations will increase by at least 10% with the signing of the new agreements.*

**Source:** “Rusia censura amenazas de sanciones de EEUU por apoyo a Venezuela (Russia Censures U.S. Sanction Threats to Venezuela and Vows Support),” *HispanTV*, 18 October 2019. <https://www.hispanTV.com/noticias/rusia/440348/trump-venezuela-maduro-sanciones>

*According to Maria Zakharova, the spokeswoman for the Russian Foreign Ministry, “It seems that the United States cannot accept that some Latin American countries are capable of defending themselves independently or conducting internal and external political affairs despite the pressure imposed by sanctions.” Zakharova also stated that Russian troops will remain in Venezuela at present time.*





## Puebla Group to Bogota?

**OE Watch Commentary:** Last month, we reported on a new organization among the region's activist left, called the Puebla Group ("What is the Puebla Group?" *OE Watch*, December 2019). That organization, tied in some form to the Forum of Sao Paulo, has since had its second plenary meeting and is planning a third in Bogotá within the coming six months. The conference's closing declaration, which the accompany reference reports, was given by Clara López Obregón, a Colombian politician. That she was giving the closing address in Buenos Aires is a good indication that she is now a leading persona likely to enjoy the full support of the progressive left in future Colombian elections. Holding the next meeting of the Puebla Group in Bogotá is perhaps evidence that Colombia is considered by the pro-Bolivarian left to be the center of gravity of the regional political struggle. In her presentation, López expressed a litany of geostrategic positions in complete concordance with the positions of the Bolivarian Marxist parties in Cuba and Venezuela. Some of the specific policy mentions are noted in the accompanying extract, including promotion of several other regional intergovernmental network mechanisms such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, CELAC. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...We promote Latin American and Caribbean integration...”**

**Source:** Editors, “Tercera reunión del Grupo de Puebla será en Colombia en 6 meses, según la declaración final leída por Clara López, en Buenos Aires (Third meeting of the Puebla Group will be in Colombia in 6 months, according to the final declaration read by Clara López in Buenos Aires),” *Colombia Renaciente*, 11 November 2019. <https://nuestropartidoescolombia.info/tercera-reunion-del-grupo-de-puebla-sera-en-colombia-en-6-meses-segun-la-declaracion-final-leida-por-clara-lopez-en-buenos-aires/>

*“...We promote Latin American and Caribbean integration and the role of distinct organisms and spaces for regional alignment, such as CELAC, MERCOSUR, UNASUR, and the Alliance of the Pacific, among others...”*

*We celebrate the liberation of ex-President Lula [Brazil]...*

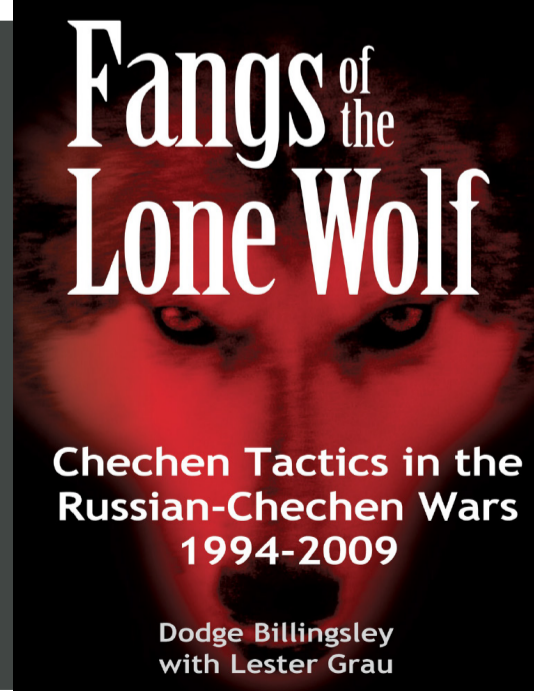
*We reiterate our unrestricted support to the Colombian Peace Accord...*

*We once more condemn the anachronistic economic, commercial and financial blockade of the U.S. against Cuba...*

*We ratify support for the legitimate claims of the Chilean people to protest against inequality and injustice...*

*We call attention to the grave situation in Haiti...*

*We celebrate the triumphs of Alberto Fernández, President-elect of Argentina and Daniel Martínez, Candidate of the Uruguayan Broad Front [Martínez we on to lose the election later in the month, however]...”*



Fangs of the Lone Wolf is about combat experience in urban, mountain and fairly open terrain. It is not a comprehensive history of conflict. This book is a series of snapshots — of vignettes — describing the difficulty, the hardship, the victories and the defeats of the participants. It is an examination of the raw data of combat in a foreign land, and is aimed to advance the professional military study of conflict.

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195587/download>



## Reactions to Protests and Mass Demonstrations in Colombia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Recent mass protests in Colombia consisted of numerous groups with varied causes and grievances. Of concern to some Colombian political observers, however, was the suspicious organization and behavior of some elements beyond the protests. Emanating from announced and anticipated national strikes, starting on 21 November, the country experienced national level demonstrations that lasted for a month and included some violent incidences. As the accompanying passage from the *Bogota Post* notes, the strike was due to a variety of reasons ranging from frustration with the peace process to the government's proposed economic and political reforms to rising living costs. An estimated 200,000-1 million people demonstrated and the government responded by deploying 170,000 troops while many neighborhoods formed neighborhood anti-demonstration organizations. The accompanying passages focus on the demonstrations on 21 November specifically.

The second accompanying reference relates to a wave of vandalism outbreaks in Bogota that followed the day's more peaceful marches. According to the reportage from *El Tiempo*, Colombia's highest circulation daily, these actions appeared planned and coordinated—not having the kind of indiscipline as what might be expected of looters. Also, as the passage from *Diario Occidente* notes, “What happened the 21st of November was very strange because the violent actors acted cautiously.” Still another commentator posited that the objective of one of the groups was “not to protect the demonstrators” but “to incite and provoke violent actions...” **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...Residents got together in defensive blocs; they displayed weapons ...”**

**Source:** “What You Need to Know about Colombia's National Strike,” *Bogota Post*, 20 November 2019. <https://thebogotapost.com/what-you-need-to-know-about-colombias-national-strike/42173/>

*Tensions have been rising in the run up to Colombia's national strike (paro nacional), which will take place tomorrow, November 21. It's the first national strike in three years, and a multitude of disaffected groups will take to the streets to protest across the country.*

*Who's striking?*

*This year, as with many recent years, we've already seen protest action from students, trade unions, indigenous groups and many more. Tomorrow's strike is a national strike, which means it's not organised by any one group – rather, a mixture of all of them.*

*Over 40 workers' unions will strike tomorrow, along with peace activists, women's rights groups, student campaigners, indigenous groups, environmental organisations and of course ordinary people.*

*Why are they striking?*

*Just as there's no single group taking part in the strike action, there's not one single reason for striking either. A recent Gallup poll put President Duque's disapproval level at 69% compared with an approval rate of just 26%. The disapproval rate has grown from 37% when he first took power in August, now reaching its highest level.*

*There is a frustration about a rise in living costs – especially in comparison with the minimum wage – corruption, the VAT increase, issues with the health system and the cost of petrol. The Gallup poll showed that in general, Colombians are not optimistic about the future (70% believe that things are getting worse) and that an increasing number of people are concerned about guerrillas, especially following the announcement that certain dissidents will return to arms.*

**Source:** Alberto Ramos Garbiras, “Vándalos de ocasión (Opportunist Vandals),” *Diario Occidente*, 9 December 2019. <https://occidente.co/opinion/columnistas/vandalos-de-ocasion/>

*“They appeared abruptly and began a period that made the whole City anxious and raised suspicions regarding their behavior due to the fragrance in which they acted and the multiple/coeval in various sites of the City, appearing to have been transported there and rallied...Residents got together in defensive blocs; they displayed weapons that their neighbors didn't even know they had: pistols, shotguns, rifles. But what happened the 21st of November was very strange because the violent actors acted cautiously. The 21st of November, Vandals appeared in groups, as though they had been in agreement, or were directed by a superior group...”*

**Source:** Paola Ochoa Amaya, “El club de la pelea (Fight Club),” *El Tiempo*, 9 December 2019. <https://www.eltiempo.com/opinion/columnistas/paola-ochoa/el-club-de-la-pelea-columna-de-paola-ochoa-441666>

*“The committee promoting the strike is a donut of bourgeois men who do not represent Colombians...A club of machos made up of presidents the union centrals who have lived their whole lives enjoying the fruits of power and money that runs in their veins. I'm specifically referring to the fight club: Diógenes Orjuela (Central Unitaria de Trabajadores), Julio Roberto Gómez (Confederación General de Trabajadores), Luis Miguel Morantes (Confederación de Trabajadores de Colombia) y Nelson Alarcón, FECODE). They are a minority from every point of view: union workers are a fifth part of the formal workers of the country, barely a fourth of the State workers and only 7% of the total of workers in Colombia. And within that minority, the presidents of the workers centrals are doubly in the minority. Their salaries are far greater than the rest of the union workers...the only thing they are doing is to extract rents for themselves...”*

**Source:** Cynthia Vargas Castillo, “El aeropuerto El Dorado permanece militarizado (El Dorado airport remains militarized),” *Radio La FM*, 10 December 2019, <https://www.lafm.com.co/bogota/aeropuerto-el-dorado-permanece-militarizado>

*“...The 3rd Brigade said, ‘We still maintain some military assistance patrols at strategic activities’ Likewise, some gates of that air terminal were closed, especially in international flight zones...”*

**Source:** Cantalicio Ruiz Silva, “Las verdaderas motivaciones de la llamada ‘Primera Línea’ (The real motivations of the so-called ‘First Line’),” *La Linterna Azul, El Monitor and Colombia News*, 10 December 2019. <http://www.lalinternazul.info/2019/12/12/noticias-15/>

*“...First Line is an evolving structure that has features of two types of violent demonstration professionals: the European ‘medical street’ that claims to be nurses who give first aid to wounded demonstrators, and the more mobile and violent Chilean groups that have confronted and wounded that countries Carabineros... In its propaganda, ‘First Line’ presents itself as humanitarian with solely defensive objectives...The objective of ‘First Line’ is not to protect the demonstrators: it is to incite and provoke violent actions...”*

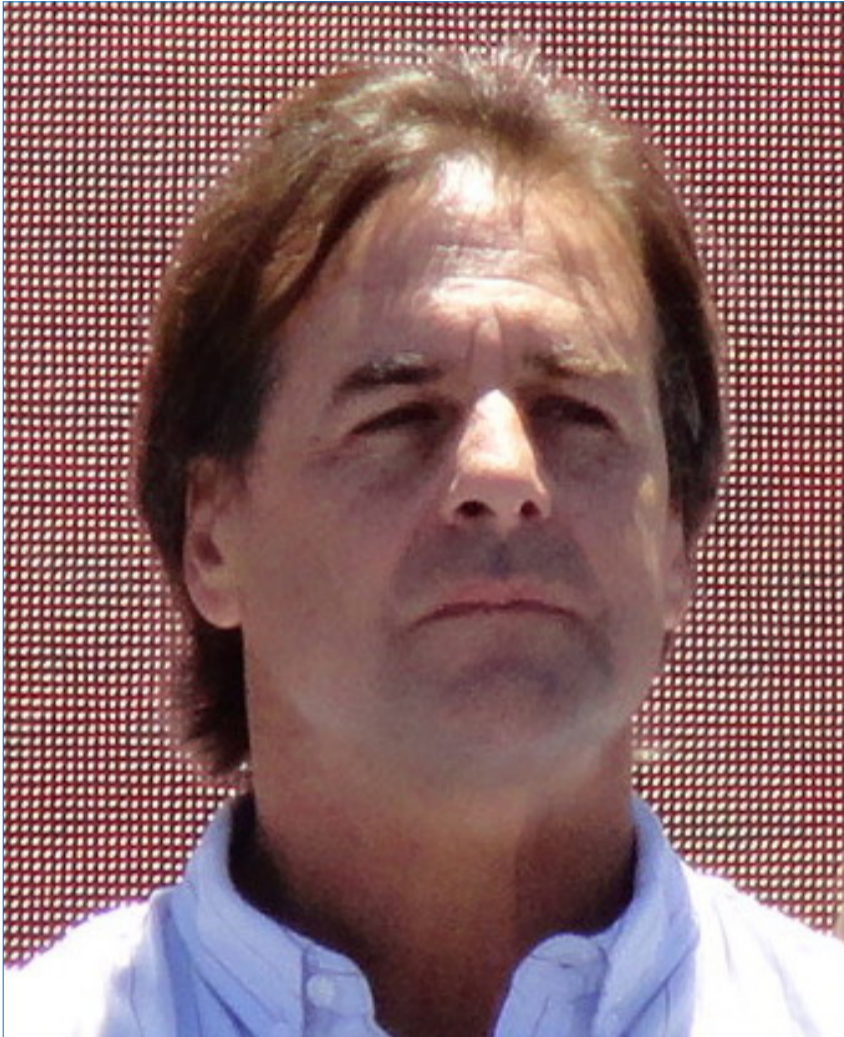
**Source:** Karol Álvarez Vélez, “Indígenas alistan una nueva invasión contra Bogotá (Indigenous prepare a new invasion of Bogota),” *Radio La FM*, 10 December 2019. <https://www.lafm.com.co/colombia/indigenas-alistan-una-nueva-minga-nacional>

*“...“They are asking for 10 billion pesos to not invade Bogota and to not ‘protest in front of the Casa de Nariño’... According to Huipa [indigenous leader] they are asking the Administration to fulfil the promises and all of the agreements made that have been signed from years past, otherwise they will leave in caravan next week, warning that in addition, protest points will be established in different zones of the national territory that will compromise important transportation nodes.”*





# Uruguay Elects Louis Lacalle Pou



Lacalle Pou, 2019.

Source: NaBUru38 via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lacalle\\_Pou\\_2019.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lacalle_Pou_2019.jpg), CC BY-SA 4.0

**OE Watch Commentary:** Uruguayans peacefully went to the polls on 27 October. For president, they elected Luis Alberto Alejandro Aparicio Lacalle Pou and as Vice-President Beatriz Argimón, whose term will be begin on 1 March. President-elect Lacalle Pou is of the National Party, one of the traditional parties of Uruguay. He is the son of former president Luis Alberto Lacalle de Herrera and former Senator and First Lady, María Julia Pou Brito del Pino. The President-elect and his party are by appearances modestly less leftist than the outgoing Tabaré Vázquez. The transition is expected to go smoothly, and we can expect Uruguay to continue to nestle somewhere between Brazil and Argentina. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...‘We are quite pleased’, said Argimón...”**

**Source:** Staff, “Hoy Se Festeja y el Lunes Comienza la Transición (Today the Celebrating and Monday the Transition Begins),” *Partido Nacional*, 29 November 2019. <https://www.partidonacional.org.uy/portal/index.php/9-noticias/6652-hoy-se-festeja-y-el-lunes-comienza-la-transicion>

*“‘We are quite pleased’, said Argimón...Danile Martínez recognized Luis’ victory yesterday and wished him well by way of the social media... Also the president of the Broad Front (Marxist-oriented party coalition) congratulated the President-elect... ‘We will assume the role of opposition on 1 March and from there we will be ready to contribute to the construction of the best Uruguay possible.’”*

1986



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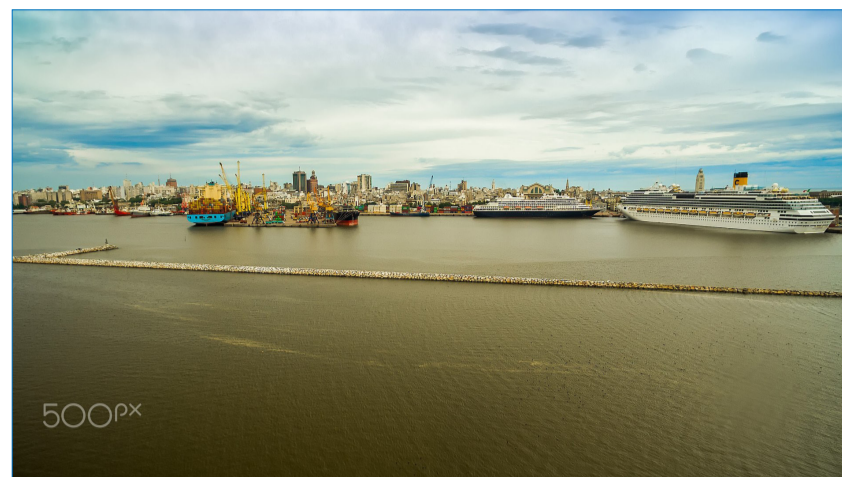




## Uruguay Emerging as a Cocaine Transit Route

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages from Latin American sources discuss the Port of Montevideo in Uruguay as an emerging route for large-scale cocaine shipments to Europe. They also discuss port security measures and compare Uruguay to other countries in the region regarding how much cocaine it exports.

In late July, German authorities seized approximately 4.5 metric tons of cocaine (valued at \$1 billion) at the Port of Hamburg in Germany, that had departed from Montevideo, Uruguay; the largest quantity of cocaine ever seized in the country. According to Uruguayan news source *Clarín*, this seizure may represent two new emerging drug trafficking trends: “New drug trafficking organizations are likely operating in Uruguay” and “Montevideo may represent a new route for container vessels transporting cocaine to Europe.”



Port of Montevideo.

Source: Marcelo Campi via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Port\\_of\\_Montevideo#/media/File:Harbor\\_Montevideo\\_\(139510361\).jpeg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Port_of_Montevideo#/media/File:Harbor_Montevideo_(139510361).jpeg), CC BY-SA 3.0

Following the Hamburg seizure, authorities began looking into why traffickers identified the Port of Montevideo as a low-risk export destination. Uruguayan news source *Teledoce* reported that authorities first began looking at security measures and the flow of imports and exports at the Port of Montevideo and discovered some factors that make not only the Port of Montevideo, but also ports across Uruguay’s coastline ideal for traffickers. For example, as the passage from *Teledoce* notes, “there is only one scanner at the Port of Montevideo and searches are rarely if ever conducted in the evening.” Furthermore, “the only instance in which containers are searched is if paperwork submitted by the export or import company appear suspicious.”

The first two passages suggest that cocaine shipments began using the Port of Montevideo as a jumping off point into the international market only recently. However, Uruguayan news source *DW* claims in the third accompanying passage that the country has always been a transit point for cocaine given its porous border. This source also notes that for over 10 years, Bolivia has utilized Uruguay as a cocaine export hub. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

**“Montevideo may represent a new route for container vessels transporting cocaine to Europe...”**

**Source:** “Alarma en Montevideo, Uruguay: ¿Nueva ruta de los narcos para enviar droga a Europa? (Surprise in Montevideo, Uruguay: Is it a New Route to Send Drugs to Europe?),” *Clarín*, 30 September 2019. [https://www.clarin.com/mundo/uruguay-nueva-ruta-narcos-enviar-droga-europa-0\\_2XILpK5.html](https://www.clarin.com/mundo/uruguay-nueva-ruta-narcos-enviar-droga-europa-0_2XILpK5.html)

*Uruguay is a small country and has not traditionally been on the radar of authorities looking to seize large scale drug shipments. However, following the seizure of 4.5 metric tons of cocaine that departed from Montevideo, Uruguay to Hamburg, Germany, in July 2019, Uruguayan authorities have come to at least two conclusions. First, they assert that new drug trafficking organizations are likely operating in Uruguay although members of these organizations have not yet been identified. Second, authorities commented that Montevideo may represent a new route for container vessels transporting cocaine to Europe. One reason for this assumption is that customs agents in Montevideo are very focused on imports as they represent 12.6% of Uruguay’s gross domestic product. As for exports, the tendency is to move large cargo shipments out of the port as rapidly as possible to lower costs.*

**Source:** “Estos son los controles que se realizan en el Puerto de Montevideo en la entrada y salida de contenedores (Security Measures Implemented on Cargo Ships Entering and Leaving the Port of Montevideo),” *Teledoce*, 14 August 2019.

<https://www.teledoce.com/telemundo/nacionales/estos-son-los-controles-que-se-realizan-en-el-puerto-de-montevideo-en-la-entrada-y-salida-de-contenedores/>

*An estimated 1,500 cargo containers are transported to ports along Uruguay’s coastline daily. Of these, 10% of imported containers and 5% of exported containers are scanned. According to Gerardo Ramis, the President of the Customs Dispatch Association in Uruguay stated the following regarding container searches, “It is impossible to scan all containers as it is time consuming and the radars emit large amounts of radiation”. Furthermore, there is only one scanner at the Port of Montevideo and searches are rarely if ever conducted in the evening. Finally, the only instance in which containers are searched is if paperwork submitted by the export or import company appear suspicious.*

**Source:** “Uruguay, nueva bisagra del narcotráfico global (Uruguay, New Global Drug Trafficking Hub),” *DW*, 6 August 2019.

<https://www.dw.com/es/uruguay-nueva-bisagra-del-narcotr%C3%A1fico-global/a-49912035>

*“Uruguay has always served as a transit country for drugs. However, the discovery of the 4.5 metric tons seized in extremely in Hamburg indicate serious deficiencies in how customs and border police are operating”, according to Robert Parrado, a Uruguayan security advisor that strongly criticized the government regarding the Hamburg seizure calling it negligence.*





## “Not a Coup” in Bolivia

**OE Watch Commentary:** Things are not settled in Bolivia. Evo Morales, exiled in Mexico (but perhaps moving to Argentina), has not renounced his presidency and is looking for a way to return to power. He has the support of the Bolivarians (Cuban PCC and Venezuelan PSUV) as well as the president of Mexico and the President-elect of Argentina, among others. These in turn have broad extra-regional support, including from China and Russia. The interim government in Bolivia, led by Jeanine Añez Chávez, is not comfortably in power and has its work cut out for it to get the government and the country back on an institutionalized path. Whether the recent ouster of Evo Morales’ regime was a coup is a recurrent debate prompt, but Bolivians will not be seeing a non-election change as historically unique. Regardless, according to Bolivian government spokespersons, it is imperative that the country gets to liberal elections soon, and with mathematical results that can be trusted by the electorate. The accompanying extracts from an interview given to journalist Márcio Resende by Bolivia’s interim Foreign Minister, Karen Longaric provides a good example. **End OE Watch Commentary (Demarest)**

**“...No, it was not a coup d’état...”**

**Source:** Márcio Resende interview, “‘No, no fue golpe de Estado’ dice canciller boliviana Karen Longaric a RFI (No, it was not a coup d’état, says Karen Longaric, the [Bolivian] Foreign Minister, Karen Longaric to [News Agency] RFI),” *RFI*, 1 December 2019. <http://www.rfi.fr/es/americas/20191201-no-no-fue-golpe-de-estado-dice-la-canciller-boliviana-karen-longaric-rfi>

*[Resende] Q. Morales has denounced this as a coup d’état. What is your opinion?*

*[Longaric] A. No. It was not a coup d’état. In Bolivia we are in a transition backed by the Constitution...*

*[Resende] Q. Might Morales be a candidate if he returns to Bolivia?*

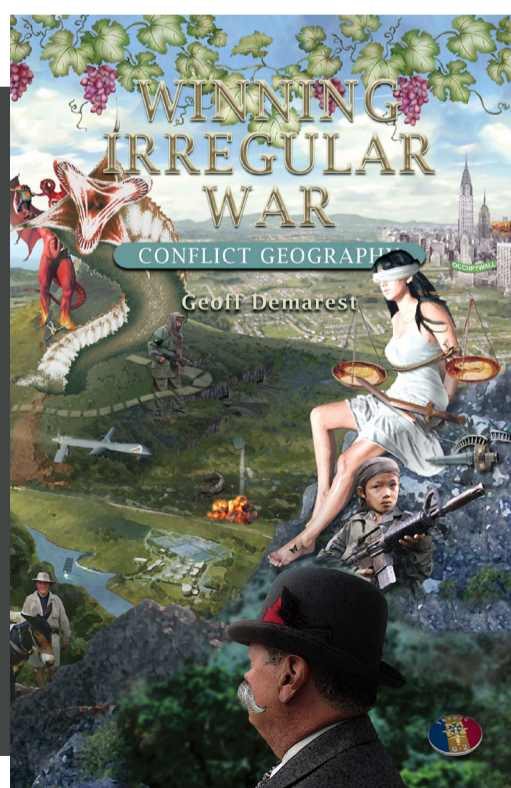
*[Longaric] A. No...*

*[Resende] Q. It is no surprise that that Venezuela supports Morales but he also has the support of Mexico and the president-elect [now President] of Argentina, Fernández. What do you think of that?*

*[Longaric] A. That we have a here clearly a designed geopolitical plan of these populist governments that they call ‘Socialism of the XXI Century’ to which it appears that (the President of Mexico) has added himself...*

*[Resende] Q. What is the main challenge for Bolivia at this moment?*

*[Longaric] A. Pacify the country move forward with the elections as soon as possible, carry out transparent elections with expert international cooperation...”*



**Geoff Demarest’s *Winning Irregular War* is about a broader set of conflicts than just ‘insurgency.’ In its 144 sections, Geoff Demarest uses a distinct, reconciled, more effective strategic grammar that draws on the disciplines of law and geography over political science. As Geoff Demarest puts it: “I hope that some of the ideas in it will be contagious.”**

<https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-books/195392/download>



# China's Diplomatic Relations with Costa Rica

**OE Watch Commentary:** Costa Rica formally established diplomatic ties with China in 2007. Twelve years later, in late 2019, Costa Rican news source *La Republica* interviewed Tang Heng, China's Ambassador to the country as part of the 70 year founding of the People's Republic of China. This interview is translated in the accompanying article and the excerpted passages highlight how China currently sees its relationship with Costa Rica and how it can assist the Central American country advance in areas such as cyber-commerce and renovative energy, among others. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

***“China wants to work with Costa Rica to increase cooperation in... commerce, cyber-commerce, energy renovation, agriculture, science and technology, infrastructure and education/culture.”***

**Source:** “China fortalece relaciones con Costa Rica en el marco de su 70 aniversario (China Strengthens Relations with Costa Rica as Part of its 70 Year Anniversary),” *La Republica*, 19 October 2019. [larepublica.net/noticia/china-fortalece-relaciones-con-costa-rica-en-el-marco-de-su-70-aniversario](http://larepublica.net/noticia/china-fortalece-relaciones-con-costa-rica-en-el-marco-de-su-70-aniversario)

*The following questions about Costa Rica were asked by La Republica news source during an interview with Tang Heng:*

***How Does China View their Last 12 Years of Diplomatic Relations with Costa Rica?***

*According to Heng, “The last decade has been a testament to healthy development and rapid growth in binational ties. Diplomatic relations have been characterized by increased confidence, mutual political views and the positive results gained via cooperation in diverse areas. For example, both China and Costa Rica agreed on the Strategic Equality Association in 2015. This association aims to ensure mutual gains, cooperation, and agreements that benefit both countries. Furthermore, both countries also signed a Memorandum of Agreement that would ensure Costa Rica’s cooperation in China’s Belt and Road Initiative. The cooperation and agreements discussed demonstrate that the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Costa Rica was the right decision”.*

***How Does China See Costa Rica?***

*According to Heng, “We have always seen Costa Rica as an important partner in Latin America. We are both responsible countries that fight for peace and worry about the future of humanity. Given that Costa Rica makes the same efforts to develop its economy and improve its citizens quality of life, it is only natural that we would be great friends and partners who are willing to help each other mutually.”*

***In what Areas can China Support Costa Rica?***

*According to Heng, “China wants to work with Costa Rica to increase cooperation in areas such as commerce, cyber-commerce, renovative energy, agriculture, science and technology, infrastructure, education and culture.”*



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## How China's Economy Could Benefit Costa Rica

**OE Watch Commentary:** The accompanying passages discuss how China's rapidly growing economy could benefit Costa Rica. In the first accompanying passage from Costa Rican news source *Primera Plana*, Tang Heng, China's Ambassador to Costa Rica, discusses three ways this may be possible: increased exports, creating infrastructure, and cultural exchange opportunities.

Costa Rican news source *Surcos* similarly points out that the Central American nation could tap into a market of 1.4 billion individuals via the free trade agreement signed by the two countries in 2010. This source also discusses opportunities that China is offering to Costa Rica, including sharing technological information and cultural/educational opportunities. Costa Rican news source *The Costa Rica Star* provides additional information about how the Chinese New Year is celebrated in Costa Rica.



Chinese New Year 2008 in Costa Rica.

Source: Yuan-Hao Chiang via Wikimedia, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/A%C3%B1o\\_Nuevo\\_Chino\\_en\\_Costa\\_Rica\\_%282008%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/be/A%C3%B1o_Nuevo_Chino_en_Costa_Rica_%282008%29.jpg) CC by 2.0

In recent years, trade between China and Costa Rica have steadily increased and at present time, the Asian giant represents Costa Rica's second largest trade partner. And according to Costa Rican news source *La Republica*, bilateral trade between the two nations was valued at \$2.4 billion in 2018. This amount represents a 6.7% increase from 2017. The final passage further discusses those sectors in Costa Rica that have benefited the most from increased trade. Apart from trade, China vowed to help Costa Rica improve and/or create infrastructure upon creating diplomatic ties in 2007. **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**

***“China’s economy represents one of the fastest growing in the world and its immense trade market could provide great opportunities to Costa Rica in terms of increased exports.”***

**Source:** “Desarrollo económico de China ofrece oportunidades para Costa Rica (China’s Economic Development Represents Opportunities for Costa Rica),” *Primera Plana*, 28 November 2019. [http://primeraplana.or.cr/es/Contorno/China\\_ofrece\\_oportunidades\\_para\\_Costa\\_Rica/](http://primeraplana.or.cr/es/Contorno/China_ofrece_oportunidades_para_Costa_Rica/)

*China’s economy represents one of the fastest growing in the world and its immense trade market could provide great opportunities to Costa Rica in terms of increased exports. Tang Heng also noted that China’s experience in creating infrastructure could benefit Costa Rica as it has in the past. And in closing, he noted that the agreement signed between the Chinese Embassy and Costa Rica’s college of Journalists and Communication Professionals in September 2019 was created to promote rapid sharing of current affairs and Chinese culture in Costa Rica. This same agreement also provides cultural exchange opportunities for Costa Rican Journalism and Communications students to study Chinese culture and learn Mandarin in China.*

**Source:** “Planificación Estratégica-La clave de la reforma y el desarrollo de China: Oportunidades para Costa Rica (Strategic Planning-The Key to the Reform and Development of China: Opportunities for Costa Rica),” *Surcos Digital*, 28 November 2019. <https://surcosdigital.com/planificacion-estrategica-la-clave-de-la-reforma-y-el-desarrollo-de-china-oportunidades-para-costa-rica/>

*There are multiple reasons that Chinese growth and development represent opportunities to Costa Rica. For example, China’s 1.4 billion inhabitants could open the door for increased Costa Rican exports in the future. Also, at present time China is providing Costa Rica with access to technological resources and training in addition to expanding the “Let’s Talk Mandarin” cultural and language program that was originally started in 2016. As part of this program, China offers scholarships to students from public schools to study at Chinese educational institutions. Within Costa Rica, the Chinese Embassy in has helped this program expand by providing funding to the Ministry of Public Education. To date, an estimated 10,000 students from 10 public schools have benefited since this program.*

**Source:** “Chinese Community in Costa Rica Celebrates the New Year,” *The Costa Rica Star*, 15 February 2018. <https://news.co.cr/chinese-community-costa-rica-celebrates-new-year/70653/>

*“The celebration of the Chinese New Year is one of the most important for the Chinese people. This celebration in China lasts for as much as 15 days; here in Costa Rica we have promoted the idea of having one day where the Barrio Chino (China Town in capital city of San Jose) fills with people that want to share and celebrate our joy”, explained Franklin Wang, from Cathay Bank, spokesperson for the activity.*

**Source:** China fortalece relaciones con Costa Rica en el marco de su 70 aniversario (China Strengthens Relations with Costa Rica as Part of its 70 Year Anniversary as the New China),” *La Republica*, 19 October 2019. [larepublica.net/noticia/china-fortalece-relaciones-con-costa-rica-en-el-marco-de-su-70-aniversario](http://larepublica.net/noticia/china-fortalece-relaciones-con-costa-rica-en-el-marco-de-su-70-aniversario)

*The free trade agreement signed between Costa Rica and China in 2010 is currently benefiting the Central American nation. For example, in January 2019, China became Costa Rica’s primary market for beef as exports of this product increased by 52% in 2018. Costa Rica is also exporting large quantities of coffee, bananas and pineapple to China. Regarding infrastructure, China helped Costa Rica expand Route 32 (Braulio Carillo highway which connects San Jose to the Caribbean side of the country), modernize its National Stadium, and build a potable water system in Cañas-Bebedero (rural area of the country).*